

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
C. ARTHUR PEARSON

(OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 481.

FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 19TH, 1898.

[ONE PENNY.]

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But mention

SHORT STORIES.



A FEAST OF FICTION

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THE UNCANNY HAND.

"WHAT a restless creature you are," said my friend Stephen Vronsky, one evening, as we sat together in an apartment which I had just then taken, and which overlooked the Champs Elysées.

"Ah!" I answered, as I puffed a blue cloud into the air.

"Yes, I should think you were what you Theosophists call an astral body. I received one letter from you postmarked Calcutta. A week later I heard of you in Ceylon. Then you were on a camel's back headed for Damascus, and—now, well, I don't know whether you are really here or not, for you seem so nearly ubiquitous that you make me dizzy."

"But you are glad to see me all the same, eh?"

"That, of course, my boy. But how do you manage it?"

"I don't manage it, Stephen; I strictly follow the impulse of Theosophy. I am migratory; not so ubiquitous as our Mahatmas can be. But I find my happiness in being on the move. I'm not a rooted tree, but a creeping vine."

"I should say a flash of lightning! Still, here you are, and I propose to enjoy you to the top of my bent. By-the-way, splendid rug, that!"

"Yes, I got that of an old dealer in Bagdad. You never saw one like it, I imagine?"

"And that tapestry?"

"Oh, I'm glad you appreciate that. Bought it at an auction three years ago, here in Paris. Louis XIV."

Stephen had a fine eye—a perfect hawk's-eye—for bits of rare pottery, old vases, antique bronzes, and the like. So we spent half-an-hour in looking over my collection; and then we talked about Theosophy.

"Well, that's the queerest thing yet," he said, as he

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stood at my table, some time afterwards, looking at half-a-dozen bits of *bric-à-brac*.

"The inkstand?" I said. "Yes, that is quite worth a critical survey. I bought it in——"

"No, no!" he interrupted impetuously. "Not the inkstand; but that——"

"Ah, yes," I answered. "It was one of my prizes, perhaps my chief prize; but the story connected with it is one I seldom tell."

"I never saw its like," he went on.

"Probably not, my dear boy, and its like you never will see again."

"It looks like a skeleton hand."

"That's precisely what it is."

"Truly?"

"Certainly. Those are the bones of a human hand."

"Where did you buy it?"

"I didn't buy it; it was given to me—by the owner."

"The what?" he said, in a genuine surprise.

"The owner," I said. "A dead man gave it to me in payment for services rendered."

"A dead man! A Mahatma?"

"No, I think not," I answered. "But I am telling you the plain, unvarnished truth. If you want the story you shall have it; but I assure you beforehand, you will not believe a word I say. Nobody would or ever could believe it, so I have kept the matter to myself for fear of being dubbed a fool."

He took it up and examined it carefully.

"That's real bone, I should say," he soliloquised.

"It's a coarse, hard, big hand; and the man who owned it was a——"

"A thief," I broke in.

"You are very observing, Stephen; and your description of the man does you credit. When he gave it to me the several bones dropped apart, of course; but I had them carefully mounted, as you see, and it is one of my most sacred souvenirs."

He insisted on my telling him the details of the incident, which I did, not wholly without reluctance, because it deals with what is commonly regarded as the impossible. I couldn't blame him for discrediting my statements, neither can I blame you if you follow his example and shrug your shoulders.

"In October, '89, I roamed through parts of southern Europe bordering on the Adriatic, and never visited by tourists. I was on foot most of the time, for it gave me leisure to see the country and to study. I passed through Herzegovina and Montenegro, and got well down to the borders of Albania, which is close to Greece, and, being very tired, planted myself in a wretched inn in Parga. The hills at the back of the village are infested by brigands who are very gentlemanly and very savage. They treat you with the utmost respect until they've got your last penny, and then send you to glory with a bullet in your brain. I had been warned, however, and managed to avoid the friendly attentions of these rogues.

"If you want to find the climate of Paradise, go to Albania in October. Right before you lie the placid, deep-blue waters of the Mediterranean. Above you is a sky with such a depth of colour as your eyes never beheld. It seems to bend over you in confidential friendliness. And as for the fields and mountain sides— But, bless me, what's the use in trying to paint the picture? It can't be done. And the nights—the October nights! I never saw such stars—cohorts, legions of them vieing with one another in brilliancy. Not a cloud to be seen; only that vast expanse of blinking gems.

"Well, just outside the village limits is a graveyard. It's not much, but it's antique and quaint. I used to wander through its paths, and wonder how men could die with such a beautiful place to live in.

"They told me that a famous brigand had been buried in one corner of this little God's-acre, and I had a morbid curiosity to find his grave. It was not difficult; and one evening I sat on the sod that covered him, and indulged in the moody thoughts to which the occasion gave rise. Perhaps I had been there half-an-hour—the latter part of the time with closed eyes.

"Suddenly I heard a strange rattling of bones at my side. Opening my eyes, and turning my head, I saw, sitting close to my side, a skeleton.

"'Good-evening, signor,' said the bony jaw.

"You know I pride myself on my Italian, so I returned his salutation; but, I admit, with a strong, creeping feeling, which was about as close to fear as I care to come.

"'I live down there,' he said, pointing to the grave.

"'So I judge from your looks,' I replied.

"'I have been dead,' he went on—'let me see—it's forty years now.'

"'Fully as much as that,' I remarked, as I called his attention to the fact that there was no flesh on his bones.

"'I am, indeed, terribly wasted,' he said with a sigh; 'but they are all so. The waters are close, and there's no fresh air. I was once as plump and round as you are. And now see!' He shook his arm, and its joints made a very unpleasant, grating sound, like the opening of a door with rusty hinges.

"Then I half rose, thinking I had had quite enough for one evening; but he placed his left hand on my arm, and said:

"'Sit still, signor. I have something to say—a secret to divulge. You can help me. Will you?'"

"I professed myself entirely at his service.

"'You know who I am?' he asked.

"'I have not that honour.'

"'Did you never hear of Antonio Berotti?'

"'What! The famous old rascal—the terror of all the country round—the bandit?' I exclaimed.

"'The same,' he replied; and something like a smile wreathed his fleshless mouth.

"He was evidently gratified at my knowledge of his career.

"'Well, what of him?' I asked.

"'I am Antonio,' and as he uttered the words he fairly chuckled. 'Yes, I am Antonio, and there has been no brigand since to compare with me. The fellows nowadays are all apprentices. They never learnt the profession; they bungle. But, bless you, signor, you should have seen me in my palmy days. Why, the girls were all in love with me. I could have taken my pick of the lot. And as for the men—well they grew pale when they heard I was coming down from the mountains. See that high cliff yonder? How it stands out against the sky! That was my home. I had many a happy year up there, and many are the pretty lips I have kissed—the prettiest in all the country. Lack a day, but I'm dead now, and I don't believe they would like me in this guise. It's a great burden to be dead, signor. Allow me to say I don't like it.'

"I intimated that I had no personal knowledge on the subject; but had no doubt, judging from appearances, that he was a good authority.

"'Now to the point,' he said, with some degree of impatience. 'I order you to go to—'

"'Order me?' I asked, rather irritated at the imperious manner he assumed.

"'I beg your pardon, signor,' he instantly responded. 'If I were in the mountains, as in the old days, I should use those very words, and if you failed to obey, your head would pay the forfeit. But now—and there was a sigh in the air—now I am only a dead lion. I plead with you, therefore, and most humbly beg you to—'

"'Go on,' I said. 'I will do what I can to serve you. But I am an Englishman, and not accustomed to being ordered by anyone.'

"'And you have no bandits in your country?' he asked, with a surprised tone.

"'Well, no professional bandits,' I answered. 'We have, however, a large number of company promoters who exercise your functions.'

"'Ah, what an unhappy country for an enterprising man to live in. I don't wonder that you have come to dear Albania.'

"'Are you an enthusiast in your profession?' I remarked.

"'I am, indeed,' he replied. 'But to return to my request. I am anxious just now that you should find the widow Borosi. I have an important communication for her.'

"'Ah, I see! There's a woman; it's always a woman. Can't you get along without these dallyings, Antonio, now that you are in your grave?'

"'You mistake—you mistake, signor. The moment you see her you will understand that there is no love in the case. Why, she is cross-eyed, and has the temper of a walrus. You do not compliment my taste.'

"I saw that he was really offended, and I hastened to apologise.

"This is my story," said the brigand, who was easily mollified. "Just before I was—"

"Killed?" I suggested.

"Quite right. It's an ugly fact, and I don't like to recall it, but as we are talking confidentially, I may as well say 'killed.'" Well, just before that event occurred, I made a raid with my band on the villagers. It became necessary, in the course of the scrimmage, to put a stiletto into Pietro, the woman's husband. That is to say he had a large sum of money in the house, and very unreasonably refused to give it up. I tried all proper arguments, but somehow he wasn't convinced. Some people—a brigand, perhaps, notices that more than the layman, because his opportunities for observing human nature are greater—some people part with their cash very reluctantly. I didn't want to do Pietro any injury; but, to tell the truth, it couldn't be helped. I had only half-an-hour to spare for the job, and was naturally in a hurry to get through with it, and out of the way of the officers, who were not friendly to me. So I made a pass at the old man, and he went down. The woman behaved in the most frightfully unbecoming manner. She wailed, and moaned, and screamed. I rebuked her tenderly, but she was deaf to my words.

"Well, her son—unfortunately he was her only son—broke in on us, and was inclined to be violent. I rather liked the boy, but he was altogether imprudent in getting mixed up in the affair. If he had simply attended to his father all might have been well. But he rashly produced his blade, and that angered me. He even succeeded in making a flesh-wound on my left arm. I'll show it to you, signor, for he was a brave boy. See! Ah, I beg your pardon; it's no longer on my left arm. I forgot. However, the upshot of the business was that I was forced to kill the son, too. I was sorry; but business is business, and must be attended to.

"I took the money, and I got away; but, for some unaccountable reason, that woman's voice haunted me. I heard it at the most inopportune times. I would come home tired and worn out by a little excursion, and I couldn't sleep. A sort of chronic insomnia attacked me, and I became very uncomfortable. I used to reason with myself. What are a couple of men, more or less, I argued, in a great world like this? They were honest fellows, and doubtless went to Heaven. They had, therefore, nothing to complain of. But it did no good; my sleep was gone. I couldn't understand it; but there was the fact.

"The woman was impoverished! I took everything she had. What of it? The world is full of poor people, and every merchant takes all he can get, doesn't he? Isn't that the policy of all commercial transactions? I was neither better nor worse than other men who are profoundly respected, and yet—will you believe it?—I couldn't get my usual sleep.

"A month after this affair I got badly caught. My nervous system was overtaxed. I had done too much work, and here I am. The Borosi money I never used. I had an aversion to it; so I hid it in a secure place. I want you to find it, for this insomnia pursues me even into the grave. Everyone else in the churchyard enjoys his slumbers; but I wake up with a start, and am terribly lonely.

"Now I'll tell you where the bag of gold is concealed, and I pray you to find it and deliver it to the old woman; after that I hope to have a good rest. Signor, on your honour, will you do me this favour?"

"I gave the required promise.

"On my return to the hostelry I found the proprietor ready to retire, and, therefore, anxiously awaiting me. He yawned, complained of the lateness of the hour, and suggested that all honest people had been in bed a full couple of hours.

"He went before me to my room, and deposited the candle on a quaint old washstand. As he was taking his leave, I said casually:

"Did you ever hear of Antonio Borotti?"

"He dropped into a chair and stared at me.

"The—the—" he began.

"Yes, precisely; the brigand."

"I have heard of him—that, is, I have heard the villagers speak of him," he answered.

"Killed, wasn't he?"

"Yes, yes, killed by a stray bullet from a gendarme.

"Where was he buried?"

"In the north-east corner of the churchyard yonder."

"Did you ever see him?" I ventured to ask.

"He hesitated and his eyes grew large.

"I see," I said; "I see, old man. You were one of the band in your younger days, eh?"

"For the Holy Virgin's sake—"

"Oh, of course! I keep secrets very well. I only wanted to satisfy my curiosity. Good-night, and pleasant dreams."

"The next day I went to find the bag of gold.

"I never had so much difficulty in following a clue in my life. You see, forty years make a difference even in Albania.

"Two miles east of the village, I ran at last into a forest road.

"Then I saw that I was getting on famously. Right ahead of me was the mountain spur, which was my most important landmark. I was to get to a position which would bring a deep gulch in line with the bald head of this spur. It took two hours of hard climbing, but I did it. So far, so good.

"Ten rods to the right of that spot I was to find a boulder. All right; there it was, and I began to feel rather jubilant. From the boulder I was to travel just a point west of north for sixty paces, and I should come across an old gnarled beech. That was the terminus of my journey. I could be sure that the beech was the right tree, because, if I put my back against it, compass in hand, I could see the southern ledge of the mountain-spur projecting over the chasm, as though some giant had crawled on hands and knees to the edge, and was looking over.

"But there was no gnarled beech in sight, only a huge stump. However, I followed the directions, looked at my compass, and then raised my head. There, right ahead of me, was the ledge, sure enough. Where was the tree, though? I rambled about in search of it, but could find nothing. By that time I was pretty nearly tired, and heartily wished that the skeleton of Antonio had chosen someone else to do his will. I sat down by the side of the stump, lit a cigar, and began to think. Forty years ago! Well, even trees grow old in that time, and perhaps this one had been cut down and used for firewood long ago.

"I noticed that the stump was hollow. As a mere act of curiosity, I thrust my hand in up to my arm-pit, and began to fumble about. I touched something—a stone, probably, I thought; but what in the world was it doing there, and how did it get there? I drew it out. It was a gold piece. I had struck the treasure by

accident. I thrust my hand in a second time, and drew out the tattered, decayed remnants of a leather pouch. The next time I got hold of a handful of gold—ten pieces. I was evidently in luck. Well, there were sixty-five of them in all, and they represented the savings of I don't know how many years on the part of poor Borosi and his wife. I concealed them carefully, and went home with the feeling that the old skeleton had good cause to congratulate me.

"The next morning I roamed through the bazaar and bought a big leather purse, evidently the counterpart of the one that had rotted, and then started to find my widow. That was not very difficult, for I found that her name was still Borosi. She had never married in all these years. That struck me as strange, for when I entered her poor little cottage, she was a comely old creature of seventy-eight, and at thirty-eight she must have been worthy the attention of some enterprising man. But women have all sorts of oddities, and I was too much interested in other matters to ask impertinent questions.

"My good woman," I said by way of introduction, "are you married?"

"She shook her head.

"How long since your husband Pietro died?"

"Oh, so long, I can hardly remember." She rocked to and fro in her chair.

"And your son?" I queried.

"He died the same day," she answered. "But why do you ask, signor?"

"Because I am an acquaintance of Antonio Berotti," I said.

"The effect of my words was electrical. The past came out of its obscurity, and was a vivid, living present. She shuddered—buried her face in her hands.

"My all!" she cried. "My dear ones the good God permitted them to die. I was left alone. All we had was taken."

"Yes," I said, "I know the whole story. Antonio told it to me."

"But he is in the churchyard," she muttered. "He, too, is dead. God forgive him his crime and the misery he caused."

"He never spent the money," I suggested.

"I do not know. I only know he took it."

"And he asked me to bring it to you."

"With that I laid the pouch on the table and rose to go.

"What does it mean?" she asked, thoroughly startled and frightened.

"I don't know what it means, any more than you do," I replied. "There is the money, however. The very same gold pieces which Antonio took. Please to count them and see that the amount is correct."

"She took them one by one, and strange reminiscences chased each other through her mind. It was a

pathetic scene. She trembled in every limb, and her eyes were filled with tears.

"They are all there," she said sadly. "All there, just the same as forty years ago. Oh, what a day that was! I have been an old woman ever since. My husband and my son! Alas!"

"But I couldn't stand it, so I hastily left the house, and I half believe she thought I was a ghost. I came so suddenly, had so strange an appearance—possibly she had never seen a foreigner before—and disappeared quickly. At any rate, she had the money, and my mission was pretty nearly at an end.

"At ten o'clock the following night—it was as dark as a pocket, by the way, and I ran into half-a-dozen head-stones—I was seated once more on Antonio's grave.

"He was a long time coming, but just as I was giving it all up for that night I heard the old rattling of bones, and there he was close by my side. He was evidently in a good mood, for he chuckled as well as he could under the circumstances.

"Well, signor?" he asked.

"It's all right," I said.

"You found the tree?"

"Yes—or rather the stump—for the tree fell long ago."

"Ah, yes; I forgot that," he muttered. "It was very careless of me. But, you see, I don't mingle with the world much, and can't get round in the daytime to see how things are going."

"There were sixty-five pieces," I said.

"That's the number. And you gave them to old Borosi?"

"I did."

"Good. A thousand thanks, signor. You have done me a great service. My insomnia is already relieved. I feel positively drowsy. My bed isn't exactly comfortable, but it'll do. I heartily wish I could give you some souvenir of my gratitude, but my quarters down below are scantily furnished, but I am very grateful. Good-bye, signor; good-bye. I will go down and take a nap. I need it, I can assure you."

"With that he began to sink into the sod. When he was nearly out of sight I heard him say feebly:

"A thousand thanks, good signor!" and he stretched out his hand.

"I took it; to my horror and dismay it came off at the wrist.

"I cried out quickly:

"My dear fellow, you've lost your hand!"

"He replied sleepily:

"It's of no sort of consequence. Keep it, if you will, and perhaps it will convince you that Antonio the Brigand did one good deed."

"That is the hand, Stephen, and that is how I came by it."

E. W. WATERS.



New Serial Story.

THE RIVAL QUEENS

A TALE OF OLD FRANCE.

By MARY FERMOR.

SUMMARY.

AMAURY MONTREUEL, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving in Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson is Montreuel's secretary.

CHAPTER III.

THE KING OF THE BASOCHÉ.

As the sun was rising next morning over the still sleeping city, two men crossed one of the wooden bridges which then connected the two parts of Paris divided by the river Seine. They were returning from a night's carouse, and looked considerably stupefied after their hard drinking. One wore a long, close-fitting great coat and student's cap, beneath which were the cadaverous features of Montreuel's secretary Maître Samson.

His companion was dressed as a knight, with a scholar's rusty gown thrown over his shoulders. His clothes were discoloured by smoke and stained with wine, but he carried himself with the air of a gentleman, and through all his shabbiness there were evident signs of better days. He was a tall, spare man of six-and-twenty, prematurely aged by dissipation, and his features wore a reckless expression. His threadbare cap rested on dark, bushy curls, he wore a dagger at his belt and, according to the fashion of his time, his long pointed shoes were tied up to his knees, only in his case the customary gold or silver chains were replaced by bits of cord.

This was Tristan de Pamiers, King of the Basoche,* at once the terror of the "town," and the glory of the "gown" in those early days.

The fresh morning air seemed to revive them, and suddenly Tristan stopped short before one of the low, wooden houses near Notre-Dame, saying, as he extended his hand tragically:

"That's it."

"What?"

"That's the abode of the prettiest girl in Paris."

Samson shrugged his shoulders contemptuously. Wine was his only mistress.

"I saw her yesterday at her window, but she ran away when she saw me looking. Ah, that glimpse was like a sight

of Venus herself, illuminating this dingy hole with her radiant beauty!"

"Are we going to talk business or not?" growled Samson. Tristan took no heed of his words, but stood as if rooted to the spot, with his hands clasped on his heart, and his eyes raised to the closed window, half in ecstasy and half in jest, apostrophising his new divinity.

"You may stop here and play the fool by yourself, then. I'm going home," said his disgusted companion.

"Heart of stone!" sighed Tristan. Then, changing his tone, he continued: "Look here, you miserable wretch, what right have you to speak to me like that? It's your place to wait my pleasure and hold your tongue."

"I hold the purse," said Samson, rattling the coins in his pouch.

The student smiled. "So you do, friend," he replied, "and your purse is very useful, even though every decent feeling is dried up within you. Your crowns are good gold, and I excuse much in virtue of them. I will come another time to the shrine of my goddess. Now I am at your service."

They moved on, and the conversation took a serious turn. Samson began:

"Have you heard the news about Agnes the Fair? Montreuel has given her the castle of Étampes and I saw her being carried there in a beautiful gilded litter last night."

"Why has he done that? I thought the king had only given it to him a short time ago?"

"She knew a secret, and that was the price of her silence."

"Is that the secret you know?" asked Tristan.

The wily Samson crept closer to him and whispered:

"I have a double secret, and I shall expect two castles as the price of my silence. I mean to be a lord before I am much older."

Tristan laughed heartily to the annoyance of his companion, but their attention was diverted by the sight of four men on the other side of the river carrying something that glittered in the sunlight.

"Heavens!" cried Tristan. "We were talking about a litter, and here comes a beauty."

Samson made no answer, but watched the approaching group with marked attention.

"Why don't you speak?"

"Your sight is better than mine, tell me if there is anyone in that litter," he said at last.

Tristan shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked intently.

*A name given to the law-students of Paris—in the middle ages—they were a somewhat turbulent and anything but law-abiding class.

"No, it is empty."

Meanwhile the men had reached the bank and were being ferried across to where the two friends were standing.



"You had better ask the bearers."

"It is certainly *her* litter," said Samson in a low tone, "but why has it come back empty?"

"You had better ask the bearers."

He hesitated, for he recognised them as belonging to Montruel's secret service, men chosen by himself for their unscrupulousness and silence. However, upon second thoughts he asked as they passed:

"You are returning from the castle of Étampes, are you not?"

"No, Maitre Samson, we did not get so far," answered the leader, adding with a malignant smile:

"As we were going through the forest we were attacked by some scoundrels who took a fancy to the lady's jewels."

"And what happened? Where is she?" faltered Samson.

"Oh, she's out of harm's way. She'll wear no more finery in *this* world," said the man callously as he moved on with the empty litter.

"*Diablo!* if your secrets are like hers, my friend, perhaps you may not be allowed to take possession of your castles, either!" said Tristan to Samson with an uneasy laugh.

"Oh, I'll see to that. But now to work again. My noble master, Amaury Montruel, wishes you to organise a rising in the city shortly."

"That's quite easy."

"Yes, I know, but he wants something a little out of the common—not a mere students' fray with a few broken heads—but an organised movement to strike a decided blow."

"Against the King?"

"No, for the King."

"Well, explain yourself more clearly."

"You know that the Pope has sent a special Legate over

here to preside at a great Council of Ecclesiastics who are to meet in a day or two to discuss this question of the King's two wives. Last night Philip Augustus went to the palace of Jean de Nesle, unattended save for this page Albret, and surprised all the great barons of France in the act of signing an agreement with the Papal Envoy to disclaim all allegiance to the King if he should persist in retaining Agnes de Méranie as his wife. At first the Duke of Burgundy, who was at the head of the conspiracy, tried to defy Philip and carry matters with a high hand, but he was glad to come to terms in the most humble manner when he found that his master had Cadoc, who was there too, and his Free-Lances at his back, for he knew that none of his men would hold the field for an hour against the Free-Lances and the King's body-guard combined. The result was that the would-be rebels found themselves practically prisoners in the hands of the king they were plotting to betray, and the Legate had the pleasure of seeing them all sign a fresh bond of fealty to Philip instead of becoming the tools of his Holiness.

"Well, that is all very well as far as it goes: but this Council will have a great effect on the minds of the citizens, and so we want the students to assemble in a body and decri Ingeburge as the real cause of all the disturbances of the Interdict, and the constant plots against the Crown which are springing up both outside and inside the Kingdom."

"But it's a lie. She is quite innocent of it all."

"That doesn't matter. If a lie is shouted by hundreds of voices, it carries far more weight than the truth spoken by a few."

The King of the Basoche thought for a moment. Then said:

"Montruel thinks he knows the students, and I know he doesn't. He wants them to tell the people a lie which will defame an innocent woman. Now these wild youngsters may have many vices—"

"Every vice," interrupted Samson.

"Well, every vice if you like; but they are younger than we are. They know Ingeburge was Queen first, that she is beautiful as well as unhappy, that the woman who ousted her is proud and insolent, and all their sympathies would go out to Queen Ingeburge, for their hearts are not dead yet!"

"Their hearts, indeed!" sneered Samson.

Tristan folded his arms and looked critically at his companion.

"You are not thirty yet, and you look like an old hag. You scoff like a fiend at the word 'heart,' at the idea of enthusiasm or chivalry. Have you quite forgotten that you were ever young?"

"Quite."

"Well, so much the worse for you, but I have not, and however low I may have sunk, I remember the time when I should have answered such a proposal as this with my dagger and not with my tongue."

As he said this, a flush of honest indignation overspread his features and restored to them some of the nobleness that they had lost for ever.

"Yes, I daresay you would have done that *then*, but what answer do you give *now*?" Samson again jingled the coins in his well-filled pouch as he asked this question, and the action took effect.

"Now," said Tristan, hanging his head, "I am nearly as base as you, and my heart only wakes up at long intervals to remind me of my lost honour; so I leave my dagger in its sheath while I treat with a knave, and if his offer is good enough—well—I take it."

Samson drew out of his pouch twenty-five gold crowns, which he counted out carefully on the ground, saying as he did so:

"We are not children, and although I don't sympathise with your high-flown ideas, I dare say there may be some truth in what you say about the students. The fact is, we

never trusted to them, but to you, yourself—you understand?"

"But how can I raise a riot by myself?"

"You might get others to help you; our good students don't go about labelled—"

An unpleasant light seemed to dawn on Tristan's mind, but he still kept silence.

"You don't seem very sharp this morning," said Samson testily, "but look here, now you've got the money there's no going back!"

"Then speak plainly."

"Certainly. I'm not squeamish. All men look pretty much alike in the same clothes. Dress a beggar, or a thief, in a student's gown, and who's to know that he's not one? Eh?"

"But it's infamous!"

"That doesn't matter. The question is: Can it be done?"

"I think——" began the other unwillingly.

"If you won't undertake it, give me back the money and I'll find someone else."

Tristan put his hand into the pocket of his ragged hose, not to take out the crowns, but to defend them in case of violence.

"If you can do it," pursued his tempter, "hold out your hand and I'll give you twenty-five more crowns, and later on you shall have what you want to prepare and bribe the vagabonds."

The King of the Basoche hesitated for a few seconds, then, stamping his foot on the ground and growling something like an oath under his breath, he held out his hand.

This conversation took place under the shadow of Notre-Dame, then in process of erection, and during this period a curious drama of old city life was being enacted around it. Along the right bank of the Seine, where the soil was soft and swampy and easily affected by the slightest rise in the river, stood groups of miserable wooden hovels in an advanced state of ruin, for no one took the trouble to repair them, seeing that they were only serving as temporary dwellings for the workmen employed at the cathedral. In many of the larger buildings lodgings were let upon a principle very similar to that of our modern "rookeries," in others privacy could be secured by extra payment, but comfort was unknown in all.

In addition to the legitimate workmen there congregated a whole colony of loafers and vagabonds, of loud-tongued vendors of various wares, who drove a thriving trade among the masons, so that "The Enclosure," as it was called, was the centre of life and interest, the happy hunting-ground of thieves and beggars, and the haunt of all the idlers of the city.

On the left bank of the river stood handsomer buildings, churches, convents, and fortress-like palaces raised their varied spires and clock-towers in picturesque confusion among the poplars which lined the Seine.

While Tristan de Pamiers had been standing before the hut which he said contained "the prettiest girl in Paris," a man enveloped in a long cloak, with a peaked cap well pulled down over his face, had been watching his movements closely, and as soon as the King of the Basoche and Maître Samson had passed out of sight, he emerged from the shadow of the protecting buttress behind which he had been standing, and, raising his cap, showed the handsome features of Albret, the king's page.

"Samson," he said to himself, "the tool of that villain Amaury Montruel, in close confab with the King of the Basoche! That means some devilry! I wonder what Tristan was looking at up there? I don't see anything very interesting."

The rickety wooden shutters of the houses were still all closed. No sign of human life was visible in this usually bustling place, no human form was to be seen on the many scaffoldings, and the great outline of Notre-Dame stood out

against the morning sky, vast and silent above him. The day's work had not yet begun.

Albret stood in something like despair alone in this strange scene. At last he said, almost petulantly:

"Well, it's no use wasting my time in this way. I have to find that pretty boy we met the other night on the road and take him to my master before the day is many hours older. How I'm to do it is another matter. *Certes!* how pretty he was! And his skin! Many a court beauty would give all she possessed for one like it. I never heard a boy with a voice like his either; I can hear it still, but I wish I could hear the original instead of the echo."

While he was debating how he should set about his search he heard a rattling noise above him, and saw the shutters of a small window in the house opposite pushed open, and the face of a young girl appear in the dusky frame.

Albret stood stupefied. "I must be dreaming," he muttered. "It is, and yet it can't be! But I never saw such a marvellous resemblance. It must be his twin sister or else I made a mistake in the darkness. There can't be two faces like that!"

He drew back behind a stack of timber, and the girl, wholly unconscious of his presence, was looking at the strange scene around her with the rays of the rising sun playing among her golden curls, and her heavy downcast lashes shading her blue eyes from the strong light. She had evidently just got up, and was not yet fully dressed; but, emboldened by the apparent solitude, she leant out of the window with her elbow on the sill, drinking in the fresh morning air.

Albret's perplexity soon took the form of sweet certainty that, whoever she might be, this girl was one who appealed to him in a way that no woman had ever done before. He tried to laugh himself out of the conviction, but it was no use; and with the realisation of his own interest in the fair unknown, came the hideous thought that perhaps Tristan had also discovered her whereabouts! The King's commission was forgotten in the sweet contemplation of her



She was kneeling beside the old man.

whom he already called his love. In a few moments the vision vanished, the girl was called away by someone within, and Albret still stood disconsolately gazing at the empty window-frame.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE ADAM FINDS A FRIEND.

WHEN Eric and his sister Eve left the kindly shelter afforded to them on the night of their arrival by the Freemasons, they were directed to go to the house of one, Maître Thomas, with whom lodged old Christian the Dane, and where they would be able to obtain a separate room for Eve. It was at the window of this tiny compartment, called by courtesy a bed-room, that Albret had seen her, and it was the knocking of her brother and Christian at the door that had cut short her reflections and the page's love-dream.

A few moments later she was kneeling beside the old man, while Eric recounted to him the events which had led up to and had happened on their journey. Their old countryman did not hold out much hope of their being able to do any good by their presence in the city.

"But surely our dear Princess Angel is not dead?" asked Eve in an earnest tone, using the quaint Danish form of the name they loved so well.

"God forbid!" replied the old man gravely. "But you will not be allowed to see her. Though I was one of her attendants who came with her from our Northern home, I have not been permitted to enter the abbey, where she is confined, for the last five months. The guards drive me away, though I have begged them on my knees to admit me. The only answer I get is the crossing of their halberds and the swinging of the massive gate in my face. Such are the King's orders."

"How cruel he must be!" said the girl bitterly. "No, he is bewitched by that gipsy he has pretended to marry!"

His two young hearers turned a shade paler with horror, and the old man went on, as if to himself.

"No, the King is not cruel. I believe he would have loved Ingeburge, for the first time he saw her he was struck by her sweetness and beauty. But the very day before the wedding, that bold, scheming, evil-eyed Hungarian had a long interview with him, and from that hour the troubles of France began. Berthoud de Méran brought a gold medallion containing the portrait of his daughter, and the King wore it round his neck even when he went to the altar."

"When he married Princess Angel?"

"Yes, even then. And many a sign was sent to warn men of coming disaster, signs in the sky, in the air, and on the earth; but no one heeded them. All through the service I saw this Berthoud looking at our Princess with an evil expression, and the King was so ill at ease that his answers could hardly be heard by those standing nearest to him.

"After the ceremony Philip Augustus withdrew to the palace with Berthoud de Méran and Amaury Montruel, who has since been his chief favourite, while the newly-wedded bride was taken straight from the church to the Abbey St.

Martin, where she has been shut up ever since. Shortly afterwards Agnes de Méranie joined her father in the city, and the unholy alliance was entered into between her and the King. Now the Pope has laid the kingdom under an interdict, and sent a legate here to compel the King to obey the church on pain of losing the allegiance of his barons."

"I have no doubt it will be very hard for us to see the Queen, but you must not discourage us too much, Christian," said Eve. "We have found one friend already, you know."

"Who's that?"

"The knight Dieudonné, who brought us into the city."

"I never heard of a French knight of that name," said the old man incredulously.



Felt himself firmly seized by the collar.

"Well, there is one, and he must be a man of some importance," put in Eric, "for he told me to go to Bishop Maurice de Sully, and ask him to give me work on the cathedral. The moment I mentioned the knight's name, the bishop told me I should be taken on at once, and I was to go to the overseer this morning. It is nearly time to start."

As he finished speaking the great bell clanged out the stroke of half-past six, and the men swarmed like ants out of the surrounding huts, each bearing his hammer and trowel ready for the day's work. The booths were opened, fires were lighted to prepare the men's food, hawkers began to cry their wares in the harsh, strident voice peculiar to their class, men went about carrying wine in large cans, from which they doled it out to customers in leaden mugs, and announced their whereabouts by jingling a bell that might be heard even above the turmoil.

Among the crowd of whining beggars, two were especially worthy of remark. They rejoiced in

the names of Ezekiel and Tréfourloux, and were familiar figures in the inclosure. Begging, even in those early days was a trade that made great demands upon the ingenuity of its followers in order to gain a hearing from the public, and competition ran so high under the walls of Notre-Dame that an ordinary cripple had no chance of making the poorest living. Therefore Ezekiel, who was of an inventive turn of mind, had folded his legs back under his body something like those of a trussed fowl, then he had twisted his arms almost out of their sockets, and, with the aid of red ochre, had embellished his temples with a long gaping gash. He wailed thus to the passers-by:

"Look, good Christians, here is a man who has lost both legs while fighting against the infidels, who has had his arms twisted with heathenish instruments of torture, and his head cloyen with a Syrian's scimitar! He was left for dead on the sandy desert, and lay there two whole weeks without a soul to care for him. Have compassion, and save your own souls by succouring a martyr for the Faith."

Tréfoilloux, who in some respects excelled his brother in misfortune, had painted what looked like a big ulcer on his left breast, and so realistic was the work that the credulous observer fancied he could see the gangrene forming and eating away the wasted flesh. He bared his chest for the consideration of half a farthing, and invited the charitable to come and study his anatomy through this gruesome hole, assuring them that it was their last chance, as he could have but one more day to live before the poison of the boar's tusk completed its deadly work. And yet with all these attractions they barely earned enough to buy paint, let alone food. All the profits were carried off by a huge woman, known as "Poor Louise," who was stretched out on a dirty heap of straw exhibiting four arms, one of which terminated in a goat's hoof.

Albret was still watching the deserted window when Christian, Eric, and Eve, wearing her boy's costume, came out of the house. He was in the act of going up to speak to them when Tristan de Pamiers, who had returned alone to the enclosure, thrust himself before Eve and asked rudely:

"How, now, my beauty, I should like to know what this masquerading means? Why do you hide the daintiest figure in the world under an ugly workman's blouse?"

Eric stepped forward, and, raising his hammer threateningly, said:

"He's only a child, master, you'd better wait till he's a man before you insult him."

The crowd closed in, expecting a row, and as Tristan laid his hand on his dagger to punish Eric's presumption, he felt himself firmly seized by the collar and dragged back a few paces.

"Who dares to lay hand on the King of the Basoche?" he said, trying to turn round. His wrath subsided a little when he recognised Albret, his former friend.

"Oh, I didn't expect to see you here, comrade! But never mind. I only know two good ways of welcoming an old friend. One is with the clinking of glasses and the other with the crossing of swords. So draw, my friend! I prefer your sword to the hammer of this churl."

The page did not attempt to draw his weapon, but stood contemptuously measuring his would-be antagonist.

"My glass shall never touch yours again, Tristan de Pamiers! As for my sword, that's another matter, but there's an old score to be paid first. How about the sums of money I've lent you in the old days?"

His cutting tone roused the other's pride for a moment, and, thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew out a handful of gold crowns and held them out towards Albret; but the sight of the coveted gold made him regret his good impulse, and in another moment he had drawn back his hand, saying, with a forced laugh:

"The deuce take your old debts! Can't you trust me, Albret?"

"No, I cannot trust you," was the calm reply.

"All right, then," said the student insolently, as he re-pocketed the money. "You'll not have the honour of trying your strength with me this morning. I don't confer favours for nothing, and," he added with a frown, "this gold has been too hardly earned to be parted with in a hurry."

With that he turned away amid the jeers of the crowd, and fought his way through the seething, unsavoury mass of human beings in no good mood either with himself or the world in general.

The three whose advent had unwittingly caused this quarrel had been standing by fearful of the result. Eric promptly expressed his deep gratitude for the page's timely intervention, and though Eve said little, her eyes were eloquent in their acknowledgment of her champion. In a few words Albret explained that he was commissioned to escort Little Adam to the presence of his master, the King. Old Christian looked dubiously at the young man, but dare not question him, and Eric was at no pains to conceal his

anxiety for his sister's safety when he heard that he was not to be allowed to accompany her.

Only Eve herself seemed to have no fear, and her voice was quite steady when she said:

"I am ready to go with you, sir."



Albret and Eve were riding quickly.

After a hurried leave-taking they separated, Eve accompanying the royal page, who piloted her carefully through the gaping crowd to where he had horses in readiness for them, and the two men, with sad, anxious hearts to begin their day's work at the cathedral.

Ezekiel and Tréfoilloux resumed their piteous appeals when this little excitement had subsided, and their perseverance met with some reward, for, as a country bumpkin was stooping down to look at the painted wound, the dying possessor thereof managed to steal his purse in addition to the coin which had been duly paid for the wonderful sight.

Ezekiel, who had not been so lucky, now bent forward, and putting one of his twisted arms on his friend's shoulder, said:

"Come now, go shares, or I'll call the fool back!"

Tréfoilloux felt the injustice of the claim, but there was no appeal, so he complied with as good a grace as he could, and a couple of hours later these two sufferers were hopelessly intoxicated in a neighbouring wine-cellar.

Albret and Eve were meanwhile riding quickly in the direction of the Porte St. Honoré, and for some minutes neither spoke. He cast many a tender, furtive glance at his fair companion, but she seemed too busy with her thoughts to notice him.

"Sir," she said at last. "Are you not the page of the knight Dieudonné?"

"Yes, Maître Adam. I have that honour," he answered with a smile.

"And the knight Dieudonné is, I suppose, a servant of the King?"

"You are right again. The King has no more faithful follower."

After a moment's thought she began again:

"Sir Page, could you not manage to let me see the knight Dieudonné before I see the King?"

There was a note of plaintive entreaty in her voice that went straight to Albret's heart, but he could not promise an impossibility, so he said gently:

"You shall see them together, Little Adam."

When they had passed the gate, and were riding away

from the city, he suddenly pulled up his horse and said, with his hand on her bridal:

"Do you recognise this place, Little Adam?"

They were in an avenue of young elm trees, and as she looked round her she saw the city behind them, and the dark towers of the Louvre standing out against the sky in front, while on either side the rich wooded fields stretched far and wide in the beauty of early spring, but it all seemed strange to her.

"No, sir; I don't think I have ever been here before."

"It was night, and you were half dead with weariness and pain; but surely you have not forgotten your ride into Paris so soon?"

"What? Was it here we met you and the knight?" she asked eagerly, with sparkling eyes.

Albret looked at her, his own eyes seeming to take fire from hers, and, with the proverbial indiscriminate of a lover, thought her as lovely in her poor apprentice's dress as if she had worn all the splendours of a court costume.

"Yes," he said, "it was here I helped you on to my horse and saw your sweet, fair face for the first time. It was here," and his dark eyes grew more eloquent, "that I guessed your secret."

Poor Eve was completely thrown off her guard by this sudden turn of the conversation, and now she almost reeled in her saddle.

"What do you mean?" she faltered.

"Look into my eyes before you turn from me in fear," he pleaded. "I know you are no boy! You are a woman, and I love you—only look at me and tell me if you think you could love me in return."

The more he pleaded the more she lowered her eyes in timid perplexity, till at last he said:

"Perhaps you have left a lover in your distant home?"

"Oh no," she whispered, but so low that he could hardly catch the words.

"Then listen," he went on with a bright, winning smile. "I believe it is destiny, for they tell me that you are the foster-sister of Queen Ingeburge."

"The brother," she corrected.

"Will you not at least trust me that far?" he asked reproachfully, "for you cannot deceive me; and even if you reject my love, I would still be your friend and hers. The knowledge that you left home and kindred to come and help the poor Queen makes you, if possible, more dear to me."

"And do you really love our Princess Angel?" she asked, forgetting all caution.

"If my life would serve her, I would give it gladly?"

"And yet you are a Frenchman; you don't know her as we do?"

"I know that she suffers, and that she is noble and pure."

Eve held out her hand to him in an ecstasy of delight.

"How can I ever thank you for those words! They have made my heart much lighter than it has been for many a long day. I know now that she has one more faithful friend in this great, cruel city, and as her friend I will trust you. You are right, I am a girl; but Eric made me wear this dress to protect me from annoyance on the journey. I am sure you are noble and good, I do trust you, and—" she added shyly, "I think—I could learn to love—you."

In her own mind she was not sure that she did not do so already.

(To be continued.)



LM Glazier

A Note and a Telegram.



WHEN I left the train at Elmwood and found that no one was there to meet me, I was surprised. I made inquiry of the porter.

"Wasn't Mr. Torrington's carriage here to meet this train?" I asked.

The man shook his head.

"It was down for the three o'clock," he replied. "Took a gentleman off."

This announcement served to increase my perplexity. Here I, having been formally invited to a house and having formally accepted, was compelled to make my way thither in a public conveyance, while another had been met at the station and carried off in comfort. Over this unusual condition of affairs I puzzled my brain on the drive out to Torrington's. The discomfort of my position was not lessened by the fact that the dinner-hour was rapidly approaching, and that I was hungry. But at length we rattled through the gates and up the drive to the house.

Maria Torrington greeted me at the door, and it struck me that there was confusion in her tone.

"I'm very glad to see you," she said; "it's a surprise, indeed."

"Surprise?" I said. "You knew I was coming."

"Er—yes," she murmured hesitatingly. "But it's so late we'd given you up. You must hurry for dinner. Hobson, show Mr. Bottomley his room."

Here a tall figure loomed out of the darkness into the foreground, and before I could follow the servant who had taken my bag, my hand was seized, and a heavy voice said:

"Hello, old man! Glad to see you!"

"Why, hello, Brooks!" I exclaimed. "I'm glad to see you."

Glad to see the man with whom I had been racing for two years for the fair prize, Maria! When I was alone, I stamped the floor vigorously, and tore open my bag with such violence as to send the contents scattering. This thing was getting unpleasant. I found it hard to forgive her for asking Dick Brooks and myself at the same time, and driving him home in triumph, while I was left to take a fly.

I was angry—so angry that I went down to dinner with tan shoes on, and when I finally entered the drawing-room the family awaiting me, I remembered that I had forgotten to brush my hair, and was conscious that it was all standing out at the back. It seemed that, flustered and dishevelled, I was making a very poor show in comparison with the immaculate Brooks.

"I am very glad to see you," said Mrs. Torrington cordially. "It's a special pleasure, as we understood you weren't—"

Maria glanced sharply at her mother, and the kindly woman stopped, flushed, and added:

"As we were afraid you weren't coming."

During the dinner several remarks were made which indicated surprise at my presence, and I mentally vowed to have an explanation from Maria. After dinner I succeeded in inducing her to walk on the lawn.

"Now tell me why there is all this surprise on the part of you and your family," I said, when we were out of hearing.

"I think we had cause to be surprised," she said coldly.

"Cause?" I cried. "I received a note from your mother on Thursday asking me down for to-day. I accepted."

"You declined," she said, in a tone that brooked no contradiction, "and so I telegraphed to Dick to come down. See what a position you placed me in. I couldn't let him know he was second fiddle."

We had stopped walking, and she stood facing me in the light of a window. Her glance was one of deep

reproach. "We are always glad to have you, as you know, but this time it is just a little embarrassing."

"But I accepted," I maintained stoutly.

"Your note said plainly, 'I regret that another engagement prevents my—'"

I broke into a hearty laugh.

"What are you laughing about? I don't see anything particularly amusing."

"Why, Maria," I said, "it was my fault, and until this minute it never occurred to me. I got your mother's note on Thursday. I had an engagement to meet a lawyer late this afternoon to try to settle a case I am concerned in. As I couldn't attend to the business and catch the train in time to get here to dinner, I determined to try and postpone the matter. So I wrote two notes—one accepting, the other declining the invitation, to be used according to success or failure. I took them both up to town next day, and as the attorney consented to my postponing the interview, I posted the acceptance."

"You mean you got them mixed and sent the wrong one," she said. A half smile lighted her face for an instant, to give place to a settled look of displeasure.

She turned sharply, and, carrying herself with exaggerated erectness, entered the house, I following crestfallen at her heels.

The next morning I could see that Brooks was trying to get Maria by herself, and at last he succeeded. They strolled in the direction of the pond.

For a time I chafed in the library, but my feelings proved too much for me, and I went out.

My steps carried me in the direction of a pond, over a stretch of lawn, through a grove, till I halted at the sight of two hats protruding over the top of a bush a few yards away.

"Maria," I heard Brooks say in earnest tones, "I have waited now for a year for an answer. Sometimes my hopes—"

I whistled to the collie that had been bounding along near by, and when Maria Torrington and her companion stepped hurriedly into view I cried: "Hello!"

For a moment all of us must have looked foolish. The silence was broken by the girl. She had completely recovered her composure, and, fixing her eyes on me, said: "Harry, as you have doubtless heard, Dick—Mr. Brooks—has just asked me to marry him."

"Asked for the thousandth time," muttered Brooks sheepishly.

I could not hide a smile at his embarrassment, but my amusement was of short life.

"And you have also asked me," Maria Torrington went on, with a coolness that astounded me.

"Yes," I said stupidly, "asked you frequently."

"I like you both very much," she said, fixing her eyes on Brooks, who was fumbling his stick among the leaves.

It hardly seemed fair that she should look so kindly on my rival, so I called her eyes back to me by asking: "Can't you choose between us?"

"No," she replied, after a moment of thoughtful silence. "I've tried very hard, but I can't. A plan of choosing was suggested to me by your unexpected coming."

We waited for her to continue.

"There is an old saying about marriage being a lottery. I propose to increase the chances. If you two consent, I shall carry out at once the scheme that I have evolved after carefully thinking."

"Are we to toss a penny?" I asked.

"No. This afternoon I shall write two notes, one an acceptance, the other a refusal. They will be put into plain envelopes, mixed up, directed and posted. You will both know by to-morrow morning."

There was a long silence, and then Maria looked from one to the other of us and said earnestly: "You'll agree to my plan, won't you?"

"There is nothing else we can do," said I.

"Nothing," repeated Brooks.

The scheme rather appealed to me, for of late things had not been going so smoothly as I could have desired. It had seemed at times as though Brooks was drawing away from me in the race. Now a chance had been offered. Once for all the question would be settled. My luck was usually good. The plan was not so agreeable to my rival. Doubtless he felt that he had the advantage of me, and in entering into such a scheme was gambling to obtain what was already almost his own. He had no other course but to assent, though, and he did it with rather bad grace.

I was up early next morning at my rooms in town. I had calculated everything to a nicety. The postman would reach the house at 8.10 o'clock; the train for Elmwood left at nine o'clock. Provided the contents of the note that I expected were satisfactory, I would just have time to breakfast and reach the station. Should the note prove to be wrong, I certainly would not need any breakfast, and much less to catch a train.

The chances seemed all in my favour now.

Having brought myself to a state of comparative confidence, I began to pack a couple of bags full of clothes, for I had made up my mind to make a long stay at the Torrington house while I was about it. As I stuffed my golf things into a portmanteau, I pictured to myself the splendid time I would have with Maria.

A loud knock at the door called me back to realities, and when I received a square envelope addressed in a small, angular hand I realised that perhaps, after all, my joy had been premature. The note was brief, so brief that in an instant I comprehended its contents, sank into a chair, and, tossing the paper from me, repeated the fatal words:

"Miss Torrington regrets that owing to another engagement she cannot accept Mr. Blank's kind invitation to become his wife."

Why had I ever consented to risk all on a mere throw of the dice? Why—but no speculation could alter it now; I would go abroad. I would exile myself rather than witness one minute of his triumph. I would take the very next steamer—

No! After all it would but add to the satisfaction of my rival to have me eating my heart out in some foreign city. Far better to stay where I was, to work and become famous, to bring home to the girl a full sense of what she had lost by her foolish lottery.

Would a true-hearted girl—a girl worth having—have played with a man's love as she had done? She was a flirt—a confirmed flirt! How lucky was I in getting the wrong note! How fortunate!

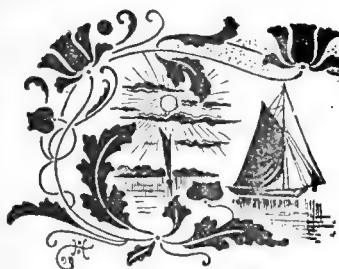
I sprang from my chair and danced round the room, singing a snatch from a song. A bag, half packed for the journey, caught my eye, and in a frenzy of joy I kicked it and sent the contents flying over the floor.

A knock at the door interrupted the celebration of my good fortune. It was the servant with a telegram.

I opened it and read:

"Dreadful mistake. Letters got mixed. Sent you wrong note. Come to me.—MARIA."

WILSON JAMES.



His Excellency the Fool.



FROM THE GERMAN OF HUGO KLEIN.

HA, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho! Even the King laughed until the tears ran down his cheeks, while his courtiers, from the general in command of his Majesty's troops down to little Biberitz, the dullest page that ever carried a lady's train, echoed their sovereign's hilarity.

And what had caused all this merriment? Someone had played a mischievous trick on "His Excellency the Fool"—otherwise Baron von Gundling. At the moment that he had entered the audience chamber, there had appeared at the opposite door a diminutive ape, clad in a costume exactly like that worn by the Baron. The little creature, which had evidently been well trained for the comedy, approached the King, bowed deferentially, and presented a petition. One of the courtiers took the paper, and with feigned gravity read the contents aloud to the assembled company. In his petition, the ape stated that he was the only son and heir of Baron von Gundling, who cruelly and persistently refused to acknowledge or support his child. The ill-treated child, therefore, humbly begged his gracious Majesty's aid in securing his legal rights, as well as kindly recognition from his lawful parent.

The laughing courtiers surrounded von Gundling and overwhelmed him with reproaches for his cruelty to his son and heir. The scene was very amusing, and his Majesty was greatly entertained. Even "His Excellency the Fool," joined in the boisterous hilarity—he had enough sense left to feel that to resent the insult would only incite his tormentors to fresh ridicule.

His Majesty had now had enough of the rude sport; he turned on his heel and quitted the audience chamber, followed by his laughing suite, who were eager to repeat throughout the city the latest joke on "His Excellency the Fool."

The echo of their voices yet resounded in the corridors when von Gundling threw himself into a chair and covered his face with both hands, while bitter sobs of anger and grief burst from his tortured heart. Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder and a grave voice pronounced his name.

"Paul!"

The fool lifted his head and turned inquiringly towards the speaker.

"Ah, is it you, brother-in-law?" he exclaimed with a half-suppressed sob.

"Yes, Paul; come with me. I want to talk with you."

The Baron nodded and rose to his feet. He knew

very well what would be the subject of their conversation; but in his sober moments he was always ready to hear disparaging comments on the ignoble rôle he was compelled to play in the gay court. Always in his sober moments he felt the bitterest humiliation; and he now longed to pour out his heart to this friend who had witnessed the degrading scene with the ape.

Herr von Ilgen led the way to his room in another wing of the palace. Von Gundling seated himself in a chair near one of the open windows. Herr von Ilgen did not at once begin the conversation, but thoughtfully paced the floor for several moments, from time to time casting a searching glance towards the silent man near the window.

"Paul," he began at last, halting beside his brother-in-law, "what misfortune brought you—you, once the ornament of the university—to such a pass?"

"Are you really curious to hear my story, Ilgen? It is a fool's history—but an instructive one for all that," he added with sudden bitterness.

"I do not ask out of mere curiosity, brother," returned Herr von Ilgen, but because I am ready and willing to do all in my power to help you out of this position."

The Baron shook his head hopelessly.

"That is not so easy a task as you imagine, my friend, the evil is too firmly rooted. The devil of a wine cup has too firm a hold on me. My degradation began in Berlin. You remember what a sensation there was when I was appointed a professor in the university at Halle? I was very young for so important a position; but the King, who was my patron, had confidence in my ability to perform the work. You know how zealously I devoted myself to my profession? I won many friends. A brilliant future lay before me. Then came the turning point of my life.

"You have no idea how beautiful she is!" after a while he went on, pursuing aloud his train of thought. "Picture to yourself a slender, lissome form, with the majestic bearing of a queen; a pale, pure face, with a pair of dark eyes that can enchant you with a smile and freeze you with their hauteur."

"Who is she?" abruptly inquired Herr von Ilgen.

Paul looked up in surprise.

"You don't know her?" he exclaimed. "Ah, then you will hardly understand my story. She is the daughter of the distinguished historian, Monsieur de Larrey. He came to Halle to examine some ancient manuscripts and during the three months he was

absorbed in his work he left me to entertain his daughter, who had accompanied him.

"It may seem strange to you that Monsieur de Larrey was willing to trust his daughter to the intimate companionship of an entire stranger; but if you were acquainted with Jeanne de Larrey, you would understand that her father ran no risk in trusting her in any society. There is about her an indescribable something that renders her as unapproachable as an iceberg. She is accustomed to the society of the most distinguished women of our age. She has travelled everywhere. She speaks fluently a dozen languages; she can repeat in the most faultless original whole pages of Homer. The world I had learnt to know amid my studies was not peopled with such women; nor were those with whom I associated in any way like Jeanne de Larrey."

"You must have fallen very deeply in love with her," observed Herr von Ilgen, when Paul stopped to draw another long breath.

"Must have fallen in love with her," repeated slowly the Baron. "Yes, but the feeling that took possession of me was very different from the sentiment usually called love. I loved—nay, love her all my life. The confidential manner she adopted toward me from the very first day we met, allowed me no confidences in return. She would tell me about her lovers—about a certain English baronet who was enamoured of her—and arouse my most jealous fears. In short, her smiles made me happy, her hauteur cast me into the depths of despair. But I felt all the time that there was no hope for me. Even if she loved me, her pride would never allow her heart to decide in my favour."

"Did you never tell her that you loved her?" asked von Ilgen.

"Yes, at least, I gave her to understand that I adored her. I told her my love in a story, but her reply chilled me. I knew that she had understood me. In silence we retraced our steps to the city. Neither of us spoke again until we reached the paved streets. I felt as if a world had been annihilated. Just before leaving her at the door of her lodgings, I summoned courage to say:

"'Were you in earnest, mademoiselle?'"

"'About my opinion of the love question in that incident you related?'" she asked lightly.

"'Yes.'"

"'Certainly I was in earnest.'"

He ceased, overpowered by painful recollections.

After a pause, Herr von Ilgen said:

"What happened afterwards?"

Paul laughed harshly.

"What happened? The rest is easily told. Jeanne was able to control her heart, but I—I was not so strong. I made illness an excuse for not calling on her again, and soon afterwards her father completed his work, and they left the city. Monsieur de Larrey came to bid me good-bye; Jeanne sent me a few cold lines of farewell. Here is the letter," taking from his breast-pocket a worn, faded paper, and extending it toward his brother, who refused, with a gesture of repugnance, to take it.

"I was very ill for several months," resumed Paul, carefully returning the letter to his breast. "I sought forgetfulness in study. My illustrious patron appointed me professor of history in the academy which he had founded for the sons of noblemen. Perhaps hard work would, in the end have cured my disappointment, but the King died, and his favourite academy was closed.

"His successor took me into his service; conferred on me the patent of nobility, and gave me the post of cham-

berlain. My sole task now was to entertain his Majesty at dinner, and in the evenings, when state affairs did not occupy him. It was an easy position, but for me a most unfortunate one. I led the life of an idler. I had too much time to think. There was no work to drive torturing thoughts from my brain.

"One day at dinner I happened to take too much wine. I was surprised to find what a singular effect it had upon me. It made me forget. I was gay, cheerful. All trouble had vanished from my heart. That is how I became a drunkard! Spare me, dear friend, a further recital of my downfall! I became a willing tippler, because wine brought oblivion; but it changed the once dignified professor into a buffoon, a clown. The King once in jest, called me 'His Excellency the Fool,' and the name clung to me. I am now what you see; a miserable sot—the court fool, the sport, the jest of every blackguard who chooses to mock me. Last week they had this costume made for me, and I wear it by His Majesty's order."

"Shameful! Atrocious!" indignantly interposed Herr von Ilgen's voice. "I shall take it upon myself to punish the miscreants who dare to do—"

"No, no!" interrupted Paul. "Why should you? They do only what my conduct gives them the right to do. Can I ask them to respect me when I have no respect for myself? I deserve their ridicule, and find consolation in the wine cup. My fate is sealed. I have neither the strength nor the desire to change my mode of existence. My ambition, my hopes, my love, all lie buried on the mountain where I told Jeanne of my love. Let me go my way, brother. Let me drink—and forget!"

Herr von Ilgen found that further remonstrance was useless. He determined, however, that the diplomatic errand which had brought him to Potsdam should also prove his brother-in-law's salvation.

A few days later, Baron von Gundling heard, while at an entertainment at the palace, a piece of news that affected him deeply. The French historian, Monsieur de Larrey, so it was said, and his daughter, the celebrated beauty, had arrived at Potsdam, and were to be presented at court.

This intelligence filled the poor court fool's heart with renewed bitterness. Although he still longed to behold once more the fair face which had so enslaved his soul, he felt that he must forego the painful pleasure. Consequently, on the day Monsieur de Larrey and his daughter were expected at court, "His Excellency the Fool" drank so deeply of the cup which gave him oblivion, that he had to be carried to bed, and eighteen hours passed before he roused from his drunken stupor. When he became quite himself again Herr von Ilgen appeared before him and said:

"Paul, I want you to go somewhere with me, but not in that buffoon's dress. Put on your black clothes."

Without a question or demur, the Baron obeyed. They drove to the Holland quarters of the city, where the carriage stopped in front of a handsome villa. They rang, and were admitted by a servant in livery, who conducted them to a lofty reception hall.

In a few moments the soft rustle of feminine garments was heard approaching, and before von Gundling could realise what had happened, Jeanne de Larrey, more majestic than ever, stood before him.

A mist suddenly obscured the court fool's vision—the meeting was so unexpected, so unlooked for! His self command utterly deserted him; his throat seemed compressed by a band of steel. Without a word he bent

over the hand extended in cordial greeting toward him, and covered it with tears and kisses.

"Are you really so glad to see me again, professor?" she asked smilingly, but with a tremour in her voice.

He merely bowed. He was not yet able to command his voice.

"And yet you have no greeting for me!" she added gaily.

"How beautiful—you are—mademoiselle!" he stammered confusedly, unable to say more.

"What! You have become a flatterer! You, the grave professor, have learnt court manners? But come, let us sit down and chat together as we used to at table. First, tell me about yourself. What have you been doing all these months? Are you still angry with me? And how did you manage to forget me so entirely?"

The half jesting, half earnest question suddenly brought the court fool to a consciousness of his situation. He turned as if to seek help from his brother-in-law, but that wily diplomat had retired.

"Where is my brother-in-law?" asked Paul helplessly.

"He is probably with my father, with whom he has business of importance," replied Jeanne.

And now he understood why his brother had brought him here! He was to be lectured by this haughty beauty. His face darkened. This poor sot who permitted all the world to humiliate him, would not submit to one word of reproach from the woman he adored.

Jeanne noted the change in his manner, and fearing that she had too soon touched upon a painful subject, hastened to add:

"My father will be delighted to see you. He has not forgotten how kind you were to us."

But Paul paid no attention to these words. Instead, he said slowly, fixing his eyes upon her face:

"How did I manage to forget you, mademoiselle? I managed it admirably. I became the court fool."

Jeanne grew pale and trembled—not at his words, for she had heard of his downfall. It was his tone, his glance, that frightened her.

"And that is not all, Mademoiselle de Larrey," he continued. "You shall hear more, since you are interested in my fate. I am a drunkard, a sot, who is happy only with a full bottle. Ah, turn in abhorrence and disgust from one so utterly vile! I do not blame you. I am a low, vulgar buffoon, not fit to breathe the same atmosphere with one pure and proud as you!"

"Herr von Gundling!" she gasped in a beseeching tone.

But a harsh, grating voice interrupted her.

"Rejoice, mademoiselle, rejoice at your work—at your work! Do you hear? It was to forget you that I lost my wits in wine. I know very well that the rose is innocent when her fragrance intoxicates the butterfly; that the star cannot help it if her brilliance dazzles mortal eyes. Nor are you, mademoiselle, to blame that your rare loveliness enchanted my soul. No, you are not to blame for winning my love; but that you loved me, and allowed your pride to scorn my love—for that I blame you. Don't turn away; don't hide your face. You cannot deny it—you loved me! You succeeded once in quieting the voice of your heart. Will you hereafter be able to silence your conscience? Answer me, mademoiselle!"

All the bitterness, all the misery, that had accumulated for years in his sore heart rushed, an overwhelming flood, from his lips in this passionate accusation.

Pale, silent, and trembling, Jeanne waited until he had concluded. Then, unable to control herself, she buried her face in her hands and burst into tears.

At this outburst of long-suppressed feeling, Paul's anger suddenly vanished. All his suffering was forgotten. He flung himself on his knees at her feet, drew down her hands, and covered them with passionate kisses.

"Forgive—forgive—Jeanne," he murmured, with quivering lips and burning eyes. "I am so unutterably wretched I know not what I say. Jeanne—Jeanne—say that you forgive me!"

"Forgive you?" sobbed Jeanne, bending towards him and laying her hands on his shoulders. "Forgive me, Paul. I deserve your reproaches, your accusations; but believe me, I do bitterly regret my miserable pride. My life has not been happier than your own, for I could not forget either. But I am here to atone for my folly. I rejected your love when you offered it to me. Will you in turn refuse mine? Look up, Paul, dear Paul, for this alone I came here. I want to be your wife."

A few days later the betrothal of Herr von Gundling to the daughter of the French historian was announced at court.

There was a decided sensation. The courtiers marvelled greatly at Mademoiselle de Larrey's choice, for it was well known that she had refused a score of distinguished suitors.

It was Jeanne's wish that her engagement should be made public. She wanted all the world to know that she was the future wife of the scorned "court fool." This was her atonement.

Many jests were made at the expense of the "fortunate clown," and brilliant plans for the celebration of his marriage were concocted in the King's audience chamber. A fitting procession should escort the bridal pair to the altar; there should be all sorts of festivities; the courtiers would arrange a series of tableaux to represent "The Triumph of Folly" and the "Fool's Reward."

But these brilliant intentions were never carried out. The fool, so it was said, fell ill; so seriously ill, indeed, that no one was permitted to see him. His illness lasted for several weeks. The marriage festivities and tableaux were indefinitely postponed, because the wedding took place in the sick-room, no one being present except the immediate relatives of the bride and groom.

Two days after the ceremony the court learnt with surprise that von Gundling, the court fool, was dead. Then the thoughtless crowd wantonly decided to make a parade of the funeral. They insisted upon taking the coffin and burning it. They never thought to look inside.

At the same hour, a close travelling carriage rolled swiftly along the highway towards Dresden. Within the carriage sat a lovely woman, the dark-eyed Jeanne von Gundling, but no one would have recognised in the sturdy postilion on the box the former court fool.

For the last time von Gundling wore the livery of servitude. When the hour came for him to remove his coachman's coach and hat, he would be a free man. He urged the steeds into swifter pace, that they might more quickly bear him from the scene of his disgrace and humiliation.

And when, after many days, they arrived in the friendly land, another postilion occupied the coachman's seat, and by the side of the lovely woman in the carriage sat her happy husband, who never wearied of whispering tender words.

THE EMPRESS OF THE EARTH

The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbia, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route.

CHAPTER XII.

JOHN HARDY AND YEN HOW.

DR. YEN HOW was seated in a garden of the Imperial City, looking at his hands.

He was arrayed in sumptuous robes of the softest, richest silk, embroidered with the tongue-darting Dragon, in token of high rank.

His pigtail reached to his calves; but, at present, only one inch and a half of it was of the doctor's own hair. The rest was artificial—made of fine black silk. Many dignitaries of even the highest rank in China adopt this device.

Yen How, a minute or two before, had drawn the chopsticks between his lips as the final ceremony to a dainty feed on rice-birds (just then in season) and the juiciest, tenderest tea. The meal had been held before him by attendants in gorgeous robes, themselves of high rank.

The ice-bound Winter of Northern China was over. The sudden, hot Spring was here.

By the right hand of Yen How was a stand of ebony arabesqued in walrus-tusk. On it was some of the pigment which the Chinese use for ink, and some of the brushes which they use for pens; there were also some folios of fine silk paper; there was a silver gong; and, half falling to the ground, the *North China Daily News*.

In Yen How's hands was an old copy of the *Shanghai Mercury*. Yen How was reading it; and as he read, his eyes went small in a smile. Something amused the doctor.

It was this: Herr von Bülow, the German Foreign Minister, had, a good many months before, made a remark in the Reichstag which was reproduced later on in the *Mercury*. Von Bülow had said: "The Chinese Empire has already lasted 4,300 years; it will last another 3,000."

"He did not mean it," murmured Yen How, "because he is a fool. But a fool may sometimes say a true thing, without meaning it."

At the same time he touched on his breast the decoration of the Red Eagle of the First Class, which the German Emperor had conferred upon him immediately after the grant by China of the territories to Germany.

Then he went on with his slow, contemplative reading.

We have spoken of the meteoric career of this man in China; we said that he "rose like a rocket." But let it not be supposed that he did all this by miracle. A rocket will not rise of itself; it must be impelled by an upward, quite accountable, force.

To what did Yen How owe his supreme authority?—for his authority was now far more supreme than that of any



SUMMARY.

YEN HOW, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, who has spent a portion of his life in almost every country in Europe studying the various nationalities and customs in all classes of life, falls desperately in love with an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition. The means he employs for this purpose are immeasurably vaster than the end.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where, by reason of his authority upon all matters connected with Europe and his high rank, he soon becomes a member of the Japanese Parliament. He rapidly becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies. The *Halcyon* is sent to Malta conveyed by the *Majestic*. In the Bay of Biscay *La Gloire*, a French battleship, is encountered, and fights the *Majestic*, which ultimately rams her opponent and then sinks. The crew is saved by the *Halcyon*.

Great Britain now prepares for war. A picket boat in the Channel sights a foreign fleet conveying transports, and John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman home on sick leave, brings the news to Portsmouth. Immediate preparations are concentrated at Brighton under the command of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the Channel fleet sails from Spithead to meet the foe. John Hardy, etc. on board the *Jupiter*, and, solely by his strength of purpose, is permitted to remain. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bossey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in

Brother of the Sun and Moon who ever occupied the throne of the Hsia. He owed it, first of all, to his Learning; secondly, to his intensity of racial instinct; and thirdly, to his audacious Genius.

To his Learning, first of all: for, in China, every door is open to the learned man. The learned man's learning, however, must be Chinese; and here was the miracle of Dr. Yen How's achievements in the State Examination Halls of Canton and Peking: that he who there proved himself more instructed than the pundits in Chinese wisdom, had spent the greater part of his life in acquiring Western scientific views and methods in Heidelberg, Paris, and Edinburgh.

He began at the bottom. He passed through the examination at Canton. The "Hall" is not a hall at all, but a double row of small sentry-boxes, each capable of holding one person only, in which the examinee, provided with food, ink, brushes, and paper, spends two solitary weeks, seeing no one, answering his questions. He usually comes out more like a dead than a living man, and, even for the most erudite, the ordeal is one of fire.

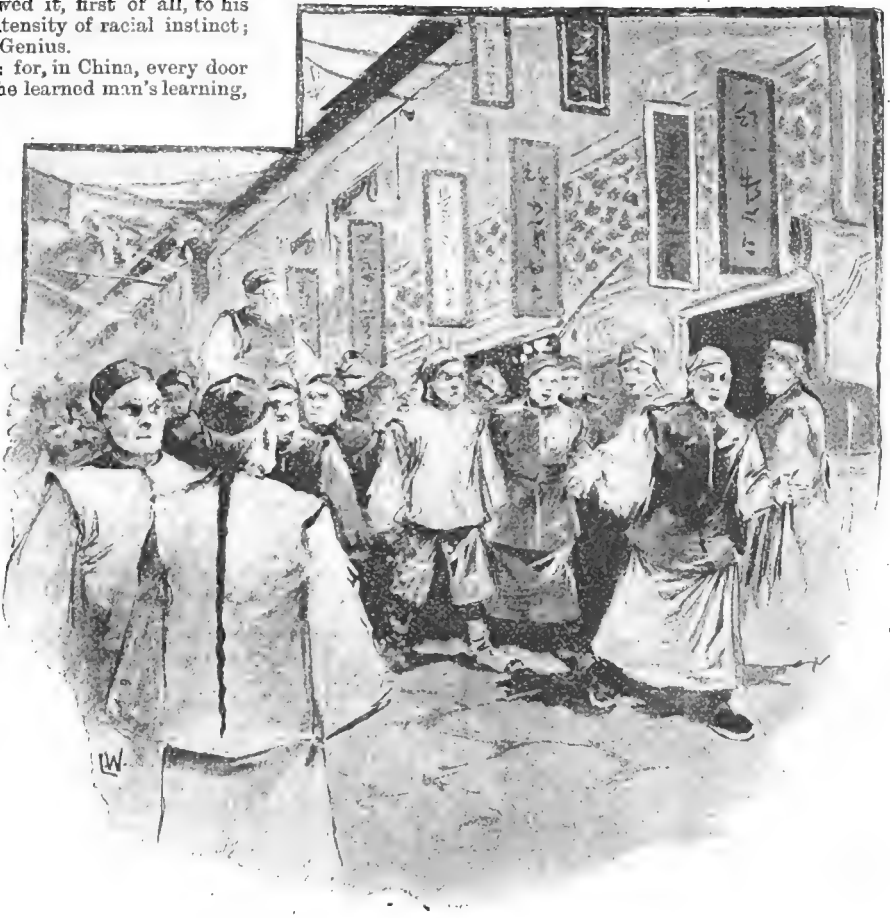
During that fortnight of dark seclusion, Yen How smiled, and smiled, and smiled again. He was examined on the complex Theology, the fanciful History, the intricate old Law, the amazing Astronomy of the Chinese. In all these subjects, and many more, their Learning consists of an immense range of minute dogmatism, which the whole lifetime of their wise men is spent in acquiring. Yen How's big brain knew all about these subjects—more about them than his examiners. But he differed from them in this: that he alone knew the falseness of the answers which he painted. His eyes were all smiles as he sat there writing about the earth going round the sun in so many seconds, and about the place of Confucius in the third hierarchy of the gods. It was the sweetest fun to him.

When he came out from his sentry-box at the end of the two weeks among a number of wan and tottering men, his tough visage showed no sign of fatigue. He smiled always. He knew that he would be First on the list.

And First he was. A couple of weeks later, when the result was announced at the portal of the "Hall," he was carried to his home through the streets on the shoulders of the people.

The Chinese populace still cherish the same awe and high reverence for the Learned Man which, in Europe, was cherished in the Middle Ages for what was called "The Scholar."

Yen How at once received a summons to appear before the Viceroy of Nanking. He appeared. A choice of two things was put before him: he might either accept a Judgeship in the Province of Kiang-si; or he might go north, and



He was carried to his home through the streets on the shoulders of the people.

compete in another examination at Peking, where, if he was moderately successful, he would possibly obtain a post in the Inner Court of the Imperial City.

One offer was a certainty; the other hypothetical. But Yen How had not the slightest intention of going to be a Judge in the Province of Kiang-si. What he wanted was Ada Seward.

He went to Peking; and very soon underwent the far sterner ordeal in the famous Examination Halls of that city. Again he was easily First on the list—a feat which at once admitted him to high honour in the Imperial Court.

He had gained his *entrée*.

Another Chinaman would now have said: "I have achieved my end." Yen How said: "I have made a beginning."

But the rest was not difficult. In Oriental countries, rises, as well as falls, are rapid. "Let Hainan be hanged and let Mordecai be put in his place." The prophet Daniel rose from nothing to the supreme power in a night. Yen How did it in two months.

So great was the necessity for Western methods, and Western science, in the Government of China, that the Chinese were actually compelled at that very time to overcome their shuddering racial abhorrence of the white



German drill sergeants were replaced by Japanese officers.

man, and to pay large salaries to white experts, in various departments, to plan and to administer. Germans drilled China's army, Britons collected her customs, Frenchmen planned her railways.

It is not possible to estimate the omnipotence which would suddenly fall into the hands of a real Chinaman who could do all this better than either German, Englishman, or Frenchman. To the Chinese tongue he was sweet as white mice preserved in honey. He became the Emperor of the Emperor.

But then, besides Knowledge and Race, Yen How had something more: he had Genius—the large Eye—the summoning Voice—the enchanter's Wand. The vastness of his outlook, the world-dimension of his schemes,—was simply fascinating. "Talk, my son, talk," old Li would say, sitting before Yen How, holding his chin in his hand, his eyes riveted on the doctor's face; and when Yen ceased, Li would say: "Talk on, my son, talk on; your words have flavour; and the palate of the ear is led astray by them."

Yen How soon became a sort of dissipation for the aged Minister.

When Li wanted sensation, he came and sat with his chin in his hand, and listened with delicious musings to Yen. It was at Li's own suggestion that the Yellow Jacket was given to Yen How. It was among the necessities of things, and Li saw it. And at once—without an hour's delay—the little Heidelberg doctor began to act.

His first care was to bring about a secret treaty between Japan and China.

He had not been idle in Tokio. He had taken frequent voyages down the Peiho to Tientsin, and thence to Tokio. Of his insinuations to, and relation with, the Marquis Ito, we have spoken. But Yen How kept his most delicious plum of temptation in reserve, till the last. He then showed that however great China became, Japan would always be the mistress of China; when China was the mistress of Europe and Asia, that meant that Japan would be the mistress of the world. The treaty was signed. It was his first step.

Yen How saw that the navy of Japan would be absolutely necessary to his schemes. Without that nothing permanent and final could be done.

His next step was to bring about the European war.

He did it so boldly, with such a grand disregard for appearances, with such contemptuous prodigality, that it was a wonder that both his present and ultimate motives were not divined. For it must be remembered that the idea of "The Yellow Danger" was no new one to European statesmen. Again and again had the more keen-eyed of politicians pointed Eastward, and said to Europe: "The Yellow Danger! the Yellow Danger!" Only a year or so previously had Lord Charles Beresford, in a speech delivered, we think, at Hull, used words like these: "The cloud at present may seem only the size of a man's hand—but it is there; and its seemingly small size is due merely to its remoteness, not to its intrinsic smallness. What appalling fate would be that of Europe, if the yellow races, in their hundreds of millions, organised a westward march, is beyond the imagination of man to conceive." Again and again had this note of warning been sounded. But the mischief lay in this very fact: that the cloud had appeared of "the size of a man's hand." It was too remote. The idea was not yet realized and assimilated by Europe.

Still, as we say, there was nothing at all new in Yen How's idea of over-running Europe, as is proved by the fact that that phrase, "the Yellow Danger," had become quite common in everyone's ears; what was new, was, firstly his discernment of the fact that the yellow races would probably fail in the attempt, unless Europe were, to begin with, made ready for them by a great inter-European war; and secondly, the novel means which he took to bring about that war.

No single soul outside China and Japan suspected his ulterior motive of overrunning Europe when he made the grants of territory—for the cloud, though often pointed out, was like "a man's hand;" but three people, at least, suspected his present motive of bringing about a European war. One was a young student in the Quartier Latin in Paris; another was Sir Charles Dilke, who mentioned it as just a possibility at a dinner at the National Liberal Club; the third was a Hampshire gentleman, who, as we said in a former chapter, wrote a letter to the *Times* during the excitement preceding the war, making this suggestion of China's motive. The letter attracted little attention. This Hampshire gentleman was John Hardy.

His eye had seen.

Yen How's first step was the league with Japan; his second was the European war; his third was the organisation of China.

This last was a great task—it was stupendous. Only a new Confucius could have done it. But Yen How was quite that.

To wake a nation which has been asleep for four thousand years! To lift the arm!—and cry aloud!—and wake them in their myriads with a "Rouse ye! rouse ye! the Hour is come! The Day breaketh!" in a voice like the Trump of Doom!

The little doctor could do it,—and did it.

But again, he did not do it by miracle. He knew his way.

The results attained by Genius, do, indeed, look like miracle; but they are not really so. The genius himself knows that he must use definitely precise ways and means, which, if used by anyone else in the same manner, would produce the same results. Genius is Industry—the capacity of being infinitely interested,—of taking infinite pains.

Yen How had been taking infinite pains from the day when he could first pronounce his own name.

All his acts in the organisation of China were based upon a minute and profound knowledge of the Chinese character. The principal points of this character are an immeasurable Greed, an absolute Contempt for the world outside China, and a fiendish Love of Cruelty.

It is impossible for the vilest European to conceive the dark and hideous instincts of the Chinese race.

The first thing that happened after the outbreak of the war in Europe, was a wholesale massacre of all Europeans in the East. Wholesale—but not haphazard: for Dr. Yen How was directing it. For the time being, every European became precious in his eyes—he collected them with care—he preserved them scrupulously—and he distributed them with deliberate wisdom. They were conveyed over China from Yun-nan to the villages round the Ming Tombs, and from the Yellow Sea to the Tien-Shans. No district was without its white victim. Then sounded Yen How's first trumpet blast to the nation he meant to rouse.

The Day breaks! It is morning! And at once there occurred a memorable Passover-Day through the length and breadth of China—a holiday of gore, an orgy of death, to symbolise the annihilation of the white race all the world over. When it was ended, there was not a white man or woman alive on Chinese soil, except on an island or two; all had perished in the act of undergoing the most loathsome public tortures. This Solemn Feast-day, this Sacrament of Blood, made a lasting impression upon the spirit of the Chinese race, which is very Sensitive to the suggestiveness of Symbols. Yen How had begun well. Certainly, he knew his man.

The killing of the German drill-sergeants of the Chinese Army had been left to be performed by the hands of the soldiers whom they had drilled.

The territories granted to the Continental nations were as yet unoccupied by them. The small European garrisons actually in China had been easily overpowered. And Europe was busy at home, fighting against herself. At last China was free to do as she chose.

The attitude of the nation as a whole at this moment resembled that of a sleeping cat, which hears a sound, and pricks her ears.

To say even so much of the Chinese is to say a great deal. For centuries they had laid in deep, stolid slumber without one prick of the ears. There were still many millions of them who, as Li Hung Chang had said when he visited Europe, had never so much as heard of the Chino-Japanese war.

How to stir up such a people? How to get at them and fire them, and make them act? Yen How knew.

He must first of all, now that he had given them a morning Dream of Blood, kick them hard to wake them, bruising their flesh, if necessary: then, as they rubbed their wide and startled eyes, he would preach to them the Gospels of Greed—and Race—and Cruelty.

Already, by the time John Hardy had reached Vladivostok—just about four weeks after the Battle of Shorham—the "kicking process" was in full swing. There was a strange stirring, a movement, a new something, in old China. Men said: "What is toward? What is to be? Can these dry bones live?" The Spirit of a Man was abroad in the land—an intense Mind, a vitalising Leaven—kneading, fermenting, energising, creating.

The massacred German drill-sergeants were replaced by Japanese officers. But where there had been one German, there appeared now a thousand Japanese.

Yen How's scheme was nothing less than this: that every Chinaman should be a soldier.

Conscription in China!

Here was a lesson learnt from Europe.

But when we say "a soldier," we mean something different from what is understood by the word among us. We do not mean a man equipped with smokeless powder

and magazine rifles, with Lee-Metfords, and Martinis, and Sniders. We mean only a man having some sort of arms—a club, or a dart, or a match-lock, or a poker—anything which would give him the idea that he had to fight, and which would perhaps delay his death a moment while myriads of others swept over those who had



Each corps was furnished with a vast corps-cavalry-brigade.

killed him. The Chinese host was to resemble a flight of locusts, covering the entire sky from horizon to horizon, each member of which was armed with some implement, not so much for the purpose of killing, as for the purpose of protracting his own death, while the rest of the host pressed forward, blighting as they went. His duty was hardly to fight, but to occupy time in dying. For this service none were too old, few too young—and women were as good as men. Yen How's army would consist of the 400,000,000 which formed the population of China.

*Walked softly towards the
great little man.*



The organisation of this war-host he planned principally on the French model.

He divided the whole of China into 240 army corps regions, each containing about two million inhabitants. This arrangement included Thibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Korea, the heads of which countries he had long since brought into line with his plans.

In each region he quartered the principal elements of the field army corps with the necessary Staff, setting up in each region a large number of recruiting depôts, and depôts of artillery, transport, supplies of food and forage, with clothing and camp equipment.

The whole of the troops and organisation for this purpose was put under the command of the General of that particular army corps and its region. And this General was, in every case, a Japanese.

Each region was divided into two hundred subdivisions, each of the subdivisions furnishing one regiment of infantry of the line, twenty subdivisions forming an infantry brigade command, and forty subdivisions that corresponds to an infantry divisional command. Divisional commands were also intrusted exclusively to Japanese; brigade and regimental commands to the most trustworthy of the Chinese officers of the regular army.

Each corps was furnished with a vast corps-cavalry-brigade, the horses—to use an Irishism—being mules, and the weapon the long spear.

Each regiment was subdivided into three battalions, each battalion into four companies, and each company into twelve squads.

Each squad numbered from sixty to sixty-three persons, who were known by numbers, from No. 1 to No. 63.

They contained children over the age of nine, women (except the wives and daughters of mandarins and other upper classes), and old men tottering on the verge of the grave. The priest and pundit classes were exempted also.

The whole nation was organised into an army.

This was one way which Yen How employed to kick and prick it into wakefulness.

Each army corps contained, besides its squadrons of cavalry and its batteries of artillery, six sections of artificers, six artillery parks, thirty companies of pontooners, one telegraph section, and forty field batteries.

But there were no field hospitals, or hospital orderlies, no ambulances, no medical provision. Yen How could afford to spare men. He had plenty.

One important feature of the army corps was the provision of armoured carts. They were to serve not only for transport, but for defence in battle, and their shape was contrived with this view, being long and low, with small wheels, and rather ponderous. One had been made, or was to be made, for each "peloton."

All this was not yet accomplished, but all was in rapid and intense progress. And the rest of the world knew nothing about it!

China, north of Tonquin, had telegraphically isolated herself.

In Japan the manufacture of guns, swords, spears, and small arms was going forward with agonised activity; and these were coming over to China in ship-loads. China's chief manufacturing energies were directed to the making of armoured carts, and the sewing together of tents.

But the drilling of China was only one half of Yen How's plan for rousing it. He knew that it was necessary to drive the nation further still, even to the verge of frenzy. He did this by taxing it.

Let it not be supposed that any part of his motive was a need of money to any pressing degree for all this war preparation. The loan raised in the previous year, which could have been spent by China in paying Japan's war-indemnity, was still in the pockets of China.

The loan had not been necessary to China at all! She could have raised sufficient to pay Japan by an issue of Treasury bonds, the purchase of which may be made compulsory in China, if they are not subscribed to voluntarily.

Or she could have called upon the various Viceroyalties to wring enough out of the mercantile and agricultural classes.

But neither loan, nor bonds, nor Viceroy extortion had been necessary! Japan was not anxious to get this large sum into her hands. She would have had to find some profitable investment for it, as she could not, of course, lay out eleven millions sterling in warships at an hour's notice. Her mere credit was good enough for the building of the vessels she needed; and the money, paid over to Japan, would simply have lain in the Bank of England to Japan's credit. As a matter of fact, in the secret treaty between the Marquis Ito and Yen How, the payment of the indemnity was remitted altogether.

From this source alone China was, for the present, rich; but under the guidance of an exact administrative brain like Yen How's, she was vastly richer still from quite other sources.

China, in reality, was never a poor country; on the contrary, she was potentially about the richest in the world. Manchuria was an El Dorado of gold. The mineral mines of Kwang-tung, Heilung-Chiang and the Kirin provinces had been the envy of the nations. But the curse of China had been her official class. The greed of the mandarin had throttled every industry. The heavy *likin* charges, which went, nearly all of it, into the pockets of its collectors

stified many an industry. The Government income was estimated at two hundred and ten million taels, but only seventy million of this—one third—was accounted for. On the remainder the mandarins wallowed in fatness.

Yen How's eyes screwed up into a smile, and he said "No more of that, my son!"

The substance of what he said, and what he did was this: "You are to extort, you are to squeeze, and plunder, and grind the people ten times—a hundred times—more than you ever did before—till they perish like sheep of it. But this time you are going to do it, not for your own benefit, but for my benefit, and for the benefit of China. I, Yen How, have said it, and will see to it."

Within two months after his attainment of the supreme power, he had created a Board, formed on the lines of the Imperial Maritime Customs, for a clean-handed collection of the internal revenues. It contained some Chinese officials, but consisted mostly of Japanese.

The immediate effect of this change was an increase—by tens and hundreds—of the revenues which began to pour into the Treasury of Peking.

From the working of the mines, specially organised and superintended by Yen How himself, a vast increment of wealth began to flow into the swollen coffers of China.

Yen How was not popular. He was kicking and pricking poor sleepy China into unpleasant wakefulness. But he knew that he had the sweetest oil in store to salve her bruises at the right moment.

All these measures of his would have spelt insurrection, revolution at another time—the introduction of the Japanese element, especially, into the new life of China was very distasteful to the people. But now the stern universal military organisation nipped every thought of rebellion in the bud.

If you want to turn a two-legged beast into a man—drill him, straighten his spine, make a soldier of him. He will never be a hopelessly unintelligent animal after that.

Yen How was drilling the Chinese beast, straightening his spine. By the time the beast could look round twice to tear whoever it was that was disturbing his slumber, lo, he was already turned into a man, with sufficient intelligence to see that there was no resisting this new Power which had him in its grip.

The Chinese, when they saw no help for it, began to fraternise with the ubiquitous Japanese element introduced

into their midst. Yen How had foreseen this. They had already, more or less, learnt to submit to the domination of white men. And the Jap was much less a foreign devil than the white man. On reflection he was judged to be an improvement. On reflection, Yen How, too, would, in time, be judged to be an improvement.

But, meanwhile, he wore a secret steel plate over his breast.

The people of China were being terribly oppressed and badgered.

The order of the day was drill, drill, drill—tax, tax, tax—work, work, work—all over the land.

As yet no one knew why all this was—what was in the mind of the gods above. Yen How had not yet begun to preach his three Gospels to the people.

So matters stood, when on the 18th of April, Yen How sat in his garden, near a little tea-house, reading an old Shanghai *Mercury*.

An attendant opened a little door in the courtyard, walked softly towards the great little man, and prostrated himself before him.

"Speak on," said Yen How.

"A white man has been captured at Monkden, Your Excellency, by soldiers of the Liao-Tong division, and sent on to Peking. They have just arrived at the Palace—and await your instructions."

"Let him be taken to the Imperial Prison-house for the night," said Yen How, "and beheaded at sunrise tomorrow."

He went on reading. The servant made an obeisance, and turned away.

Do not call the man back, Yen How! Let him go and do your bidding, and read your paper, and be at peace! For this is John Hardy that you have ordered to be slain—and he is as strong as the rocks, and the strong earth, and the sky, and the stars in their courses fight for him!

But Yen How called the man back.

"Stop!" he cried.

The attendant returned.

"What nation is he of?" asked Yen How.

"His interpreter says that he is an Englishman, Your Excellency."

"Let him be brought before me here."

And Yen How went on reading his paper.

(To be continued.)

THE VERY BEST PAPER.



THE very best paper for Sunday reading is, undoubtedly, *The Sunday Reader*; a paper which at the present time seems to have attained the highest possible standard of excellence. This is accounted for by the fact that *The Sunday Reader* has been going in for improvements.

It is now compact in size, and contains thirty-two pages, crammed with interesting articles, amusing anecdotes, brightly written interviews, striking illustrations, and stirring stories, in addition to which there is a remarkable serial running through its pages which surpasses everything which has ever been published in its own line.

Here are some of the subjects which are dealt with in this week's *Sunday Reader*; there is an interview with a blind gentleman who spends his life in visiting and cheering the blind population of London; there is an account of the quietest sanctuary in the world; a church which is, in fact, built in the heart of an immense boulder, and dozens of other articles.

EVERY WEEK.] THE SUNDAY READER. [ONE PENNY

ALL LOVERS OF GOOD FICTION

should take care to secure a copy of this week's *Home Notes* and start reading the grand new serial novel entitled:

"Playing for High Stakes,"

by Mrs. C. N. Williamson. The story is one of absorbing interest and is full of surprises from beginning to end.

In addition to the new serial *Home Notes* is full of bright articles and stories and a more than usually good novel is published in *Home Notes Library* this week. The whole form

ONE OF THE MOST MARVELLOUS PENNYWORTHS ever offered to the public.

PICK-ME-UP.

Note the New Features:

"The Great Pirate Syndicate," a grand serial story, by George Griffith, author of "The Angel of the Revolution," etc., etc., has just commenced.

"Pick-Me-Up Interviews," with Cartoons.

Short Story.

Pictures by the most eminent black and white artists.

PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY, ONE PENNY.



THEY were two, Wilhelm and Frederika Brahm, and they twain were one flesh. She, tall and massive of build; he, taller and spare unto leanness. Their little cottage home stood on a populous street of a populous South

African city. Everything inside was dingy and crowded. Everything outside was smothered in plants and vines.

The twain lived there alone; they and Fritz, the tiny black and tan, who was child and messenger and guard in one. The three sat out in front every evening from early spring-time till late autumn; she just within the little hall-way, filling up the door; he outside on the miniature piazza, or else down on the grass; the terrier, anywhere that he could best show his importance and his devotion.

Perchance a passer-by halted a moment to speak a pleasant word to the "Kaiser"—for so we called him by reason of his lofty ways—or to listen silently to the strains of the sweet old violin he was wont to play. The good wife spoke English so brokenly that she did not often do more than smile in her broad way; and Fritz usually barked desperately at every interference.

It was the impression that the Kaiser had scraped together a great deal of money. People came to overlook his silent ways, his close living, his unsocial habits, when they got wind that he was very rich. Poor people may be mean; the rich are only eccentric.

So the years dragged along, and they still sat out at twilight. Often he read aloud to her from a German paper; more often he drew his bow softly in wailing minor strains that told a tale of heart-hunger in a strange land. *Heimweh* quivered and sobbed along the strings, but none ever dared to speak to him of his hopes, his regrets, or his losses.

Winter came and drove the Brahms indoors. The first time I saw them out again was one mild spring evening, after my return from a prolonged visit out of town. I was struck with the change in the Kaiser's appearance. He was pallid unto ghostliness. Involuntarily I halted at the gate, and Fritzie went mad at my audacity.

Mrs. Brahm answered my unspoken query. "Mein Villem" (so she called her Wilhelm) "have been awful ill. I don't shust know if he would be vell some more."

"What has been the trouble?" I asked, and I knew my face was full of sympathy.

"We don't know vat it ish, but he ish weak, und he can't eat nodings no more."

Her voice stopped in a wail which Fritzie promptly echoed, his piercing eyes gazing into hers with the anguish of his own impotency.

The neighbourhood began holding conferences on the old man's looks. Clearly he was in a decline. They were wont to say he had only to close his eyes to end it all. May and June went by, and he began to shrivel up like yellow parchment. Still he sat under the clustering vines; still he drew out the long hose to water his flowers and the dusty street, feebly directing the stream upon his own domain, and not an inch upon his neighbour's dust. He still managed, too, to play the old violin.

The July heat closed in about him, and day by day the passers-by noted how he grew sparer and more cadaverous. He and his old wife had not made friends, and now, in their impending trouble, not even the most sympathising would intrude upon them. Ugly stories had got out that they were too miserly to eat enough; that they would not give away a bit of fruit, not if it wasted before their eyes. I knew better. I did not believe all I heard.

One Sunday, Ethel and Margie started to Sunday-school, when in a moment they came hurrying back to tell me there was crape on Kaiser Brahm's door. He was gone, then—the struggle was over. Towards night-fall I went. Two of the neighbours sat there in dutiful attendance, but silent and awkward. For the first time I penetrated the family room, a little square chamber close and full of stuffiness. Mrs. Brahm was not crying. She was flushed and flurried, and talked without stopping. She turned to me as a fresh and welcome listener, when I entered with words of solemn inquiry upon my lips.

"It vas his liver—his liver vas so long bad—he vent to town und he shust could git back. He said, shust feel his heart beat, und I send for de doctor. I said he must not walk any more like dot. Und de doctor, he give him de morphine. Dot killed him."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Brahm!" I hastened to reassure her. "Perhaps he would have suffered too much without it."

"No," she stubbornly insisted, "I dinks not. He did not wish to take de morphine—he said he would not.

"He made his vill," she added in an elated way; "He give me all de dings vhat he had. I have plenty of moneys and houses."

How proud she was. She was quiet through the funeral. It was all cold and formal, I thought. But the "knights" of the local "order" to which he belonged, with their nodding plumes and glittering uniform, had a look of royalty in her eyes. She fancied her Wilhelm was going down into the grave with all the pomp and circumstance of power—the insignia of rank; and it gratified her. In her simple way she overestimated its significance.

After the first day the neighbours fell away. Mrs. Brahm did not encourage them to come. But she was on my heart, poor, lonely old *Frau*. The house was smothered in gloom now, as well as in riotous green. The careful pruning fingers were at rest.

It was not quite eight o'clock one evening, some two weeks after the funeral, when, leaving my moonlit porch, I strolled down to the little wicket gate and went in.

I rang the worn bell, which rebounded with a metallic snap against the door and echoed dismally through the still rooms. Fritzie's sharp bark instantly responded, and never ceased; not even when the clumping step came out and uncertain fingers bunglingly lifted the bolts. He kept up the din while Mrs. Brahm stood in her short gown and petticoat, the moonbeams pouring their cool radiance upon her heavy features.

"Oh, I beg pardon!" I hastened to say. "I had no idea you were gone to bed, Mrs. Brahm. I feared you might be lonely, so I came down. Pray don't disturb yourself—good-night."

"I vas not feeling vell," she said. "Hush up, Fritzie! I thought I would lay down—shust to rest me, you know—I could not shleep. I vas very silly," and she tried to laugh a little. "I heer de violin all de nights!"

Oh, poor heart-broken "auld wife!" She was now realising her loss. I could well believe she heard the wail of the silent strings, so interwoven with the long summer evenings under the despoiled lattice. I hurried away, and afterwards tossed on my pillow with thoughts of the deserted creature in that cruelly silent house, all alone.

I went again and again. She was gradually losing her morbid loquacity, so I encouraged her to talk. Her mind was full of plans. It worked slowly, but grief and solitude were glancing her to the extent of her powers. She would remain in this country, she said, for three months, and then she would go back to the "Fatherland." Her husband's property amounted to ten thousand pounds. She would give nothing away till she died; then she would leave some to her sister and the bulk to her niece. She would not buy much till she reached Germany.

Smoothing her rusty, black cloak of a pattern of long ago, and thereby scattering some of the few aspiring beads left on its worn surface, she told with childish pleasure how she would buy her mourning in Germany, where it would be so cheap. Three months a widow, yet her lifelong apprenticeship of saving had put off the mourning outfit till she could get it cheap!

She said good-bye, and thanking me again for the small attentions I had rendered, said she would have a letter written to me on her arrival.

A few days later she went away. The old house came to show signs of life, if not altogether cheerful; but it could never be the same to the passers-by.

Six weeks afterwards, as I approached the old Kaiser's house at dusk, I was surprised to see a waggon in front of it, and a cluster of men, women, servants, and children about the gates. The men were slowly lifting something out. A thrill went through me as though a coffin were being handled, and I involuntarily paused. Gathering courage, I quickened my step, and arrived in time to see Mrs. Brahm seated in a chair which was being carefully conveyed up the steps by Schmitzer and another man. Amazed and in genuine concern, I followed, and inquired what it meant. The *Frau* could tell nothing, but lay with her eyes closed on the little bed upstairs, where the old violin had startled her sad memories that day. Nor did the others know, except that she had telegraphed Schmitzer the day before to meet her at the station.

The people in the house gathered wonderingly round and tenderly disrobed her. She could give no account of herself and was deaf to Fritzie's appeals.

During the night she revived somewhat, and they gathered from her mutterings that she had had a fall the day before the ship sailed and strained herself too severely to proceed on her voyage. Where she had been or what she had done all these weeks she was not able to tell.

The next morning a physician was called. He said she was suffering from pneumonia with cerebral complication. At noon, under powerful stimulants, she rallied, and the physician coaxed her to talk. He told her she was very ill.

"Will I get well?" she asked in an indifferent tone, but in good English, such as she was not wont to use.

"I can't say, Mrs. Brahm. If you have not made your will, I would advise you to do so at once."

At the magic word she half arose on her elbow and almost shrieked in tones that told of long-repressed anguish:

"Mein vill is made! My niece Gretchen—she vill git my monies," and falling back, she babbled on into incoherency.

She lay unconscious almost all the time. On the fourth evening an idea struck me.

"Where is the violin?" I suddenly inquired.

They did not know, but taking a bunch of keys from Mrs. Brahm's travelling-bag, we opened her trunk and soon came to what we sought. Lifting the box reverently, I opened it and, tightening the jangled strings, I softly drew the bow with its stiff, scraping cadence across them. The sound was not music, but it called back the fleeting senses to the world of real things.

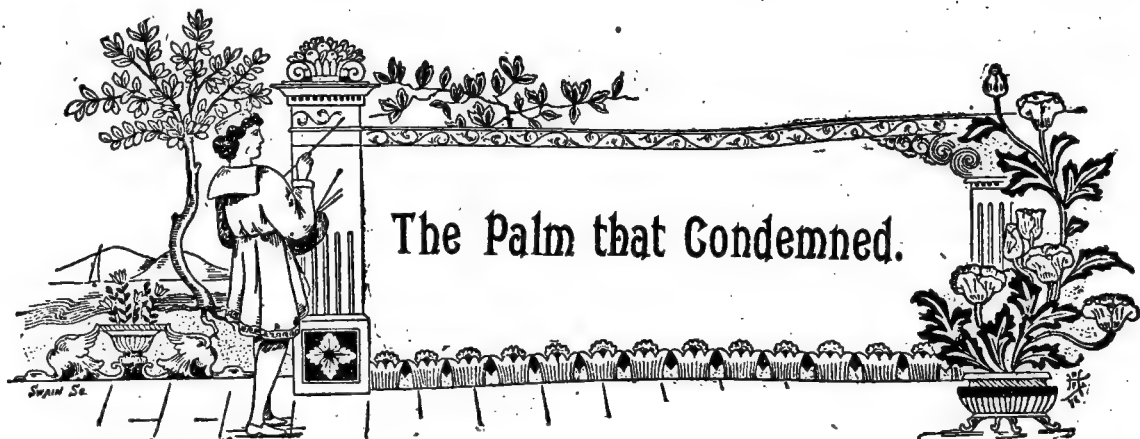
Fritzie started up to a sitting posture, and with ears erect and forehead wrinkled, gazed with glistening eyes, and gave a succession of mournful howls. The old *Frau* stirred uneasily, and arousing with an effort, looked fixedly at the instrument. Then she began muttering, while the colour came and went, and her breathing fell in gasps.

"Mien Villem," she murmured, then at intervals more words, among which I could distinguish "Faderland," "monies," "Gretchen," and "mein vill."

She never spoke again. As the last streaks of the wintry sun crept through the tiny window panes, she ceased to breathe.

We buried her beside her Villem. Three days later the little dog, to whom her coming back had been a reviving of sorrow, was missed, and the sexton of the dead city found him stretched out, stark and still, upon the frozen mound. There he buried him.

EUGENIA POTTS.



The Palm that Condemned.

I WAS visiting my friend Grace Lawrence at her father's home in a large city in the north, a beautiful old house shaded by noble old elms. Early one morning Grace burst into my room like a wild thing. Her hair was dishevelled and she was sobbing violently. I had just finished dressing and exclaimed quickly:

"Why, Grace, what is the matter?"

"Papa is dead, Eleanor—murdered!" she cried.

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Who has done it?"

"I do not know. They will not let me in."

I ran out to Mr. Lawrence's room. The door was open, and the bed had not been slept in. The servants were gathered in the hall below, and the neighbours were rushing in, as they always do at such times.

I went quickly downstairs and to the library door, which was open, and there I saw the most ghastly spectacle that ever met my vision. Mr. Lawrence, the kind father of my dearest friend, a man universally beloved and respected, and chairman of the National Bank of the City, had been foully murdered. He was sitting in his chair by the library table and had been reading one of the reviews, which still lay open on the table before him.

A deep gash in the back of the head and another in the neck, separating the jugular vein, told the story. Some miscreant had crept in through the open window and attacked him from behind. It was Mr. Lawrence's habit to read after the rest of the family had retired for the night, often sitting up until midnight for the purpose. The night had been a warm one, and evidently the cruel deed was done while we were all sleeping calmly in our rooms above.

While we stood there the officers of the law arrived, and took charge of the body. They at once ordered all of us out of the room and closed the doors; but before I went, I noticed the bloody print of a hand on the side of the window casing. When I was allowed to go into the room again it was afternoon. I went at once to examine the hand print.

You ask me why?

For some months I had been studying the science of palmistry. I had taken it up at first only from idle curiosity. Then becoming convinced that there was something in this science more than I had been taught to believe, I procured some books, and had become quite

expert in reading the lines of the palm. In some instances I had surprised my friends, and even myself, by the accuracy with which I read the past and foretold the future of my friends, upon whom I practised the art at every opportunity.

When I had finished looking at this print, which the officers had given orders should not be washed off at present, I went upstairs and got my amateur photographic outfit and took a photo of the lines, for the imprint was that of the full palm and fingers, with all the main lines distinct.

What I saw there would have convinced me, had I not known the dreadful secret of the library. This imprint, I say, would have convinced me that it was the hand of a murderer. The head, heart, and life line met almost under the mount of Saturn, and there were other indications of a murderous tendency.

I knew that officers and detectives would examine these blood stains, and I knew that experts would be called upon to bear witness in regard to them. I think it was only my interest in the study of palmistry that led me to transcribe the picture of that tell-tale hand. I little dreamt how closely it was to connect me with the unfolding of the mystery of the Lawrence murder case.

Poor Grace was so upset by the events of that night that I had all I could do to keep her from nervous prostration. She was an only daughter, and her mother had died five years before. She had been housekeeper, companion, and all in all to her father since leaving school, and he had idolised her. How she was to live without him, how she was to bear up under the fearful ordeal which faced her, was more than any of us could tell.

The funeral at last took place and the body was buried.

Much against her will we had overpowered the desire of Grace to remain at home, to which she seemed to cling with a morbid affection, and persuaded her to come with me to a summer resort on the coast.

It was the night before we were to start. Detectives had been busy on the case, and officers had scoured the country for some clue to Mr. Lawrence's murderer. No one had been more actively willing to help us in every possible way than Herbert Sheldon, the young cashier of the bank, a personal friend of Mr. Lawrence.

He had gone into the bank when he was a young lad as errand boy, having been the son of a friend of Mr. Lawrence's youth, who had died in destitute circumstances. The boy had risen rapidly. He had for several years been first assistant cashier, and then cashier of the bank. He was proud of saying that he was the youngest cashier in England.

For several months he had evinced a great liking for Grace's company and had even asked her for her hand, but Grace had not returned his admiration and had given him no encouragement. Now, however, he had come forward and been like a brother in his suggestions and watchful care of the household. He seemed to feel Mr. Lawrence's death very deeply, and could not endure any mention of him, saying several times that since matters were as they were and that none of us were able to control our grief it seemed best not to talk about it, but to try and forget it. This to me, not to Grace.

As I said, it was the evening before we were to start for the seaside. Mr. Horton, who was really a private detective at work on the case, although no one in the village but Grace and myself knew this, had called for a private talk and to ask us a few questions.

Suddenly Mr. Sheldon was announced. He came in, and contrary to his usual custom, he held out his hand willingly to Grace.

The light from the piano lamp, under which she stood, struck his open palm in such a manner that I, who happened to be standing opposite her, saw there plainly written the evidence of guilt. I knew that Herbert Sheldon could be a murderer.

Then a thought came to me with a sudden shock. For an instant I could not speak. No suspicion of such a thing had entered my mind. What could have been his object?

I sat down, allowing the others to carry on the conversation for a few moments; then the desire to read that hand more fully took possession of me. I resolved to do it.

Fortune favoured me. A little "Guide to Palmistry," which had been such a help to me in my studies, happened to lie on the table. Mr. Horton, seeing it, picked it up and said:

"Hallo! who studies palmistry here?"

"Eleanor does," said Grace; "she can read your hand like an open book. Let her try."

"All right," said Mr. Horton. "I am sure I would like to know my destiny. Wouldn't you, Sheldon?"

Herbert Sheldon laughed lightly. "Well, yes, if any young lady can tell anything from my hand, here it is." And he held out his open palm, which I so much desired to see.

For a moment I studied it in silence. It was the exact palm of that tell-tale hand on the window-casing!

I stumbled through some sort of a description which should not in any way compromise my sudden knowledge. My wit told me that if I said anything now it would put him on his guard.

Mr. Horton had not intended to stay long when he came; this I knew. My thoughts were busy, however, and I soon formed a plan. I pretended that I wanted to show him a book, so went into the library and wrote on a slip of paper:

"Wait here until Herbert Sheldon goes. I have something to tell you."

I slipped this into a book, and, carrying it back, handed it to Mr. Horton in such a way that he noticed the note and kept it concealed. He didn't even look at me, and at first I did not know whether he had noticed it; but he stayed on and on, and finally at ten o'clock Herbert Sheldon took his departure.

When he had gone, I said to Grace:

"My dear, I have something which I must tell Mr. Horton. I am afraid you cannot bear to hear it, and perhaps you had better go upstairs."

She went out of the room without a word, and I turned to the detective.

"Mr. Horton," I said, "have you ever suspected Herbert Sheldon?"

"Don't put me on the rack," he answered, smiling. "It is my business to ask questions, not to answer them. Tell me what you think."

"Herbert Sheldon's hand," I said, "is the exact counterpart of the imprint on the window casing in the library."

He started as though he had been shot.

"Heavens!" he said. "Is it possible? What proof have you?"

"I photographed that hand exactly on the day of the murder. I have the print of it upstairs."

"Why did you never tell me of this before?" he said.

"I do not know," I answered. "I only did it in the interest of science—that is, the science of palmistry."

I went upstairs and got the print. Mr. Horton looked at it carefully, and asked if he might keep it, and if I had the negative. I said yes to both questions. Then he inquired as to the previous relations of Mr. Sheldon and the Lawrence family. When I had finished, he said simply:

"Say nothing, even to Miss Lawrence. I believe we have the real clue to the murderer, but I can say no more. Keep your own counsel, and I will work it up. If I need you, I will see or send for you."

Grace didn't ask any questions as to my business with Mr. Horton, nor did we ever speak of it again. We left for the seaside early the next morning. Four weeks afterwards I received the following telegram:

"We have our man. Herbert Sheldon was arrested this morning. Has confessed."

The telegram was signed by Mr. Horton. Following up the clue of the tell-tale hand, his first step had been to have the books at the bank examined by an expert. A deficiency of about two thousand pounds was found, Sheldon's peculations extending back for two years. He had been seen also in excited conversation with Mr. Lawrence in his private room at the bank on the day before the murder, and had left him pale and very much out of temper at four o'clock in the afternoon.

When he was arrested and confronted with the evidences of his guilt, he broke down and confessed all.

The letter finished as follows:

"It is all as plain as day now. But I doubt if we had ever unearthed the mystery if you had not studied palmistry and photographed that tell-tale hand."

HELEN WINSLOW.

A MOTHER'S LOVE.

The flaming light of the sunset had long paled on the sky, and a thick wall of clouds had effaced the last ray of departing light on the horizon. Night was descending to the earth, spreading herself to the little village, and the lonely cottage at the end of it. The dark shadows crept in at the low windows, covering the ceiling, the corners, the cupboard, and the table, and only the large eyes of a purring cat, which sat comfortably on the bench near an old woman who was knitting, shone in the darkness. It was quiet in the little room, save for the untiring, monotonous clicking of the needle, the unceasing tic-tac of the clock. Now, with a whizzing sound, the clock began to strike, and its clear tones rang through the dark room.

"Eight! Now it is night; he will soon be here."

A sigh of relief left the old woman's breast. She laid aside her knitting, rose, and lighted a smoky oil lamp. Then she sat down again on the bench near the stove. The needles clicked on, the white-haired head sank on her breast, and she thought of the past.

Two years and a half ago! It was autumn. She was sitting on the same bench, waiting for her only son, who had been dismissed from the army service, to return. But he came not. The night passed, another day came, and again it was night. He came not.

"He will come to-morrow," she said each day; but the morrow dawned, and still he was absent.

Thus a week passed. Then the old letter-carrier passed her cottage.

"A letter, mother, from the only one!" he cheerily called.

He knew the stiff, awkward writing. Then he had hurried away, and "mother" had put on the horn spectacles—an old family piece, with large round glasses—stepped to the window in the full light of day, and opened the letter with trembling hands.

"Now I shall know," she thought.

She read the letter slowly! She had to spell it out word for word. The characters seemed fairly to dance on the white paper, and presently her eyes grew moist and the glasses became blinded.

"My Jano! my only son!" she moaned. Was he coming? Alas, no! The old woman sat down on the bench near the stove, clutched the letter nervously in both hands, and the tears, rolling over her wrinkled cheeks, fell upon the crumpled paper.

No, he was not coming! Perhaps he would never come! He was sitting in a close, dark cell; heavy, clattering chains fastened him to the wall. He was a criminal. He had killed a man in a scuffle. Now he would not come.

"Mother, I am innocent," he wrote, "I do not know how it happened."

The old woman only nodded her head. She knew how it happened. First the dismissal; then they drank and made merry. Her Jano was a gentle lad, but when men drink, what follows? She could picture the whole scene. Heads became heated, taunts flew hither and thither, one word provoked another, and then Jano's fist stirred, thrust itself upward—and the deed was done.

No, he did not return home. Two years and a half

in prison! The old woman sat there, si'ent. Not a word of complaint passed her lips, not a tear shone in her eyes. She was thinking how she could avert some of the consequences of this calamity.

Suddenly she rose, put on a cheerful mien, forced a smile to her withered lips, and went to call on her relatives and friends. At every house she related, hesitatingly at first, then fluently, that her Jano, her only son, would not return home at present; he had become a sailor on a man-of-war, and was going on a cruise round the world. Her listeners were surprised at first; then they praised the courageous boy, and believed it all. The old woman thought she must choke with this, the first lie of her life. But no; upheld by her purpose, she told everybody without blushing or stammering, until the whole village knew the story.

"But what of Katha?" asked one. "She has waited long for Jano, and Peter, the miller's son, has been heard to say—"

"Ah! that false one! Let Katha beware of him!" quickly replied the old woman. "For the rest, she must be patient. Is not Jano winning money for them both? In truth, such a brave, handsome lad is worth waiting for."

She spoke with assurance; no one should know that in a fit of madness her Jano had fallen—that he was in prison. No—in that event he could never return to his village, to her, his mother, who loved him so. All the people would shun him like an outcast, would walk out of his way. The children would follow him, pelt him with stones, and call him "jail bird." Then, too, Katha, who loved him, who had remained true to him in spite of Peter's fierce wooing, who counted the hours until his return, when he would lead her to the altar—she would turn from him in disgust. No, not a soul should know of it.

And the old woman smiled, was friendly to everyone, and at the same time Death dwelt in her heart. At night, when all the villagers were sleeping, she knelt before the crucifix, and wept and prayed to God that He might spare her boy in prison.

One thing still worried her. Jano must return with good clothing, must bring back money from the long trip! And so she began to save, put penny after penny away. She liked sweetened coffee very much, but now she drank it bitter, and bought no more sugar. Penny after penny! Then she spent half the night in knitting for a city firm. But no one should know it. No, indeed! She stole away from the village, and came back secretly, like a thief, week after week, summer and winter, in storm, rain, or snow.

So time passed—two years and a half. Now it was time for Jano's return—that very day she expected him.

The old woman rose, went to the cupboard, taking from it a package of warm woollen stockings, a knitted jacket, a new pair of boots, and a silk kerchief. She had saved all that. She spread out the things on the white scrubbed table. Then she stepped to the bed, and took from under the pillow a small bag of coarse linen. There was a clinking within it. She was

radiant with smiles. Two hundred francs! Yes, it had accumulated in the course of time.

She placed bread, ham, sausage, and butter on the table, and gave a last loving glance at it all. Everything was ready; now Jano could come.

Again she sat down on the bench, but ceased knitting. She listened. Was that not the well-known footstep approaching? She heard it in the yard, coming into the house; it stopped in front of the door of the room. She jumped up, but stood as if rooted to the spot, looking breathlessly towards the door. It opened softly; a tall, well-built young man came in, and two dark eyes peered at her questioningly from out a pale face.

"Mother!" he whispered.

But she had already thrown out her arms.

"Jano!" came trembling from the white lips, and in a moment he lay at her breast, and held her in tight embrace.

He had returned, her Jano, her only son!

Yes, he was again at home, and remained there. The threatening spectre of prison punishment lay behind him, thanks to his mother's love. The villagers greeted the well-dressed young man in friendly fashion, shook hands with him, and were happy that he was again in their midst. The men of the tavern made room for him at their table, drank to his health, and he had to tell them of his travels round the world. He related all sorts of things, as he had read or heard other people tell them. They had no exact knowledge of such matters here.

Then he began to work in field and meadow, day after day, untiringly. As his mother said, Jano was a good lad, industrious, kind, and honest. His only fault had been a fondness for the cup at times; but the terrible lesson he had learnt had cured him of that for ever.

After work was over, when approaching night bade all labour cease, his betrothed came tripping over the fields, and then all three, mother, Katha, and he, sat in the garden and talked over the future, the wedding, and how happy they would then be! So Jano gradually lost a certain nervous expression which had at first been noticeable, and appeared as gay as ever.

He laughed and joked, and made his old mother's life happy and bright. She looked at him with pride and forgot the past, while to Jano the dreary years spent in prison seemed like a bad dream.

It was a warm summer day. The sun shot its vertical rays down upon the earth. Worn and weary, the flowers drooped their heads. The leaves on the trees looked wilted. Not a bird in the air, not an animal in field or meadow. All had fled from the piercing rays of the sun.

Jano came along the path which lay between the gardens. He wore no coat; a wide-brimmed straw hat shaded his face, and he carried a rake over his right shoulder. Thus he walked along cheerfully, not heeding the dust which whirled up in dense clouds at every step, and then remained suspended in the air, immovable.

Suddenly he halted. A man, stooping and crawling along, slowly approached him. He was bare-footed, wore torn linen trousers and a patched and greasy jacket, under which a soiled shirt was visible. A crushed felt hat covered his unkempt hair. His face was framed by a stubbly grey beard, and the wild eyes glanced about unsteadily and penetratingly.

The tramp halted when he espied Jano. He shielded his eyes with his hand in order to see better, whistled softly, and, with a few steps, was beside the young man.

"Look here," he said in a husky voice, distorting his face by a horrible grin, "isn't this my partner of number seven?"

Jano turned pale, made a step backwards, and looked at the tramp in horror. But the latter continued calmly:

"Well, you do not remember me, it seems. I'll help your memory. I am Long Jacob, your old room mate and friend."

"And what do you want here?" Jano stammered confusedly.

And the beggar laughed hoarsely to himself.

"What do I want here? I want money—nothing more!"

Jano took a few francs from his pocket and said:

"There, take these, but go away from here—do not beg in the village. Don't let anyone see you. Don't tell anyone you know me."

The ex-convict had seized the coins quickly; now he asked in a surly tone:

"You are ashamed of me, are you?"

Jano shook his head, looked about cautiously, and whispered in his ear:

"No, no. But the people in the village do not know that—that I was in gaol, and they shall not know it, either. I never drink now. I have reformed."

"Reformed!" The beggar shook his head gravely. "I would like to reform too, but people will not let me; and beside, I suppose I have grown too old. Well, I won't betray you, Jano. Why should I? You were always a good fellow to me and were more sinned against than sinning. Never fear; I am going now, and in five minutes I'll be outside of the village. You may believe me, and I'll give you my word for it. I have a bit of honour left in me, too! A tramp's honour!"

Again he laughed low and mockingly, nodded to Jano, grinning, and dragged himself slowly on.

The young man stood watching him until he disappeared round a corner, and then looked about him anxiously. Far and wide nothing stirred—no one was to be seen.

"I am still safe," he muttered.

With a sigh of relief he went quickly towards his cottage. The threatening storm seemed to have passed by him fortunately once more.

But he had hardly left the scene of the interview when a stalwart young peasant emerged from behind a dense shrub in a neighbouring garden, leapt over the low fence, and ran quickly in the direction in which the beggar disappeared.

"Ah! ah! my fine fellow, we shall see!" he exultantly cried.

It was Peter, the miller's son.

The old tramp had really intended to leave the village, but as he walked down the road and neared an inn, he suddenly stood still, undecided as to what he should do. He shook his head, and walked on hesitatingly; then he again stood still, turned round, and came back slowly, muttering to himself:

"Well, I suppose I can take a little wine; I won't have to say anything because of that."

Presently he sat in a dingy corner of the low tavern with the third glass of wine standing before him. Ah, how the taste revived him! The stuff was good, and the cool room was agreeable to sit in, in spite of the innkeeper looking at him sideways distrustfully.

"Oh, I will pay! I have money!" he cried.

He put his hand into his pocket, brought out a franc and threw it on the table.

"Give me another glass of wine."

The innkeeper came up promptly, seized the franc, and soon brought the liquor and some small change. At the same moment another guest came in at the door. It was the young peasant. When he espied the tramp in the corner he approached him, slapped him on the shoulder, and cried:

"Good morrow, good friend. I have but now come from Jano. You know him—are relative to him, perhaps?"

The tramp, half intoxicated, looked up in surprise and muttered, swinging his heavy head to and fro:

"Not that I know. He! he! Related!"

He laughed, seized the full glass and emptied it at one draught.

Peter beckoned to the innkeeper, and then continued:

"Well, I presume then that you are not. But drink on; I'll pay for it, and these"—he held out two bright francs—"shall be yours, if you'll tell me what you know about Jano."

The tramp shook his head, but reached for the full glass.

"Oh, I guess not! I guess not!" he chuckled. "Shall I betray Jano—such a good fellow! No, no, I won't do that! Have some honour left in me!"

Peter shrugged his shoulders, produced another two francs, and pushed all four close to the convict.

"These, they are yours—and now tell me quickly what you know; I have no time to spare."

The tramp gazed at the coins avariciously.

"Four francs!" he murmured, "four francs! I have given my word—but four francs! And it is nothing very bad." He turned to Peter. "You needn't tell anybody about it—for—well, yes."

With a hasty motion he secured the money and said: "In a scuffle Jano knocked his opponent lifeless, and so had to spend a few months in gaol. It was done in self defence. There is nothing more—nothing more."

He muttered something incomprehensible, but Peter had already left the tavern. He stood out in the street, clutched his fists, and hissed through his teeth:

"At last, Jano, at last! Now Katha will be mine!"

It was evening. In the far west the sun descended to the horizon, and sank in a sea of flame. Laughing girls with the rake over their shoulder, and sober peasants, with smoking pipes in mouth, returned from the field, and all seemed refreshed by the fine, cool evening.

Jano came along a grassy path. He looked very handsome, with his glossy hair and bright eyes, and a smile of contentment played round his lips. Presently he reached the cottage where his Katha lived with her mother. The door stood open, but he went by it, passed round the house, opened a small gate, and entered a large orchard and vegetable garden.

Over yonder, on a wooden bench, sat the girl he was looking for. Her back was towards him. As he stood behind her, calling to her, she turned round as if frightened, and Jano, much astonished, looked into a pale and tear-stained face.

"Katha!" He bent over the girl and touched her shoulder. "You have been crying. Why? What has happened?"

She did not answer, but buried her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

"Katha, tell me what is the matter; what ails you?"

Then she drew her hands away from her face, looked at him steadily, and although she trembled, yet without faltering the words came from her lips:

"Jano, I beseech you, by our love, tell me the truth; is it true that you did not sail round the world, but you were—in prison?"

He looked at her in dismay; his face had turned deathly pale, and he had to lean against a tree to prevent himself from falling.

"Katha, who—who told you that?" he stammered.

She did not heed his question, but stepping nearer to him repeated:

"Tell me, Jano, is it true?"

It never occurred to the young man to deny the charge. He was above the sin of deliberate falsehood. His head sank, and in a dull, scarcely audible tone, he said:

"Yes."

She answered nothing. Silently she turned from him, drew the little narrow gold band from her finger, placed it on the bench and went slowly towards the house.

"Katha!"

The cry was heart-rending, but she did not turn back once, and disappeared into the house.

Jano stood leaning against the tree for a long, long time. Not a word passed his lips, nor did he revile the drunken man who had betrayed him; his only thought was his mother.

"Poor mother! You worked, suffered, and endured hunger in vain. Your son is a convict! The people will shout it loudly into your ears, and in your old age you will reap mockery and taunts. Poor mother!"

Night had come. Silver stars sparkled in the sky; a cricket chirped in the corn field; the frogs were croaking over in yonder marsh; the rushing of the river close by sounded dull. Suddenly there was a piercing scream. It came from a great distance. Was it the cry of some animal?

At early dawn next morning a group of men moved along the village street. Two of them carried a bier covered with a cloth, and behind them walked the miller and the village squire.

"Yes, it was this way." The miller was just concluding a long speech. "When the people called me they had already found Jano. How he fell into the river I do not know."

"H'm! Neither do I," the squire remarked.

"I am sorry for his poor old mother," continued the miller. "She has hardly had Jano back after so long an absence when she must lose him in this terrible way."

"Yes, I pity the poor woman," the squire said.

They had by this time reached their destination.

"Wait out here," the squire ordered the two bearers, and then he entered the cottage with his companion.

They walked through the dark hall into the one room. It was dim here. But the sun was rising, colouring the sky a fiery red, and the reflection shone through the little windows, skimming over a white scrubbed table, upon which lay an open Bible, and the old woman, who sat upon a chair with her hands folded. The white-haired head was inclined slightly forward, her face pale; a peacefully quiet smile played about her white lips, and the wide opened eyes stared fixedly.

Both men cast one glance only at the woman apparently asleep; then they doffed their caps, folded their hands, and murmured a prayer for her who had so peacefully passed out of life.

Yes! God had spared her the worst. Jano's mother was dead.

FRANÇOIS SURL.



"I BELIEVE my reputation as a detective began while I was in Germany," said the inspector in reply to my inquiry. "I was brought up in Berlin, and I joined the detective force in that city. I'll tell you about my first real success.

"It was just after the electric trams had started in—well, I won't mention the place, as it might offend some of my friends over there.

"It seems that the authorities of the city had had much trouble with pickpockets, and after failing to catch any of them, they had decided to send to Berlin for some unknown detective to work the lay. The chief detailed me, as the least known I presume, and two days later I was in the private office of the head of the city police, receiving instructions.

"These robberies," said he, 'are evidently the work of some persons well up in their profession. Why, to tell you the truth, my own men have had their pockets relieved and known nothing of it until they came in to make their report that no suspicious characters were on the street. Think of it! Much of the trouble has been on the tramcars—the electrics—and although I have had at least two men on that service for more than a month, the complaints have continued just the same.'

"I told him it was necessary that my arrival should be kept a profound secret.

"Without that," said I, 'I shall be of no more use than your own men, for I do not think that I am any smarter. They have failed, doubtless, because the thieves know them, and avoid them. If they learn that I am here, and come to know me, I might as well go back home.'

"This little flattery did the chief good, and he agreed at once that no one should know of my presence, he being the only one of the force that was aware of it yet.

"With this arranged, I bade him 'good-morning,' and at once prepared my plan of campaign.

"I had brought a number of disguises with me, and, putting on one of these, I made a thorough examination of the city, rode on the cars, visited some of the saloons and beer gardens, and generally took in the town.

"When I had concluded, I was obliged to admit that I had seen nothing that gave me the slightest clue to my

game, and that the work cut out for me was evidently of the most difficult.

"The second day I appeared as a farmer, clad in heavy, rough clothing, with muffler and mittens.

"In this style I rode on the cars of the electric line from one end of the city to the other; saw thousands of people, but not one that I could with safety call a 'crook.' The matter troubled me more and more every hour, and when, that night, I found my own pocket lighter in change, I was not only puzzled, but, as you may think, thoroughly angry.

"I would catch the clever thief, or make this city too hot to hold him, or them; and with that determination I began my third day's work.

"It's time I filled my pockets with small change, and rode on the electric line again. For the complaints, strangely enough, were almost confined to that line.

"Upon examining my pockets in a quiet place after a long ride I missed some money. I was angry, so much so that I decided to rest for the remainder of the day.

"The morning following I was early at work, this time as a labourer, but money *sewn* into my pockets, so that any effort to extract it would come to my notice.

"The day was stormy, and riding uncomfortable because of the crowds. It was bad, too, for my plans, but I kept at it without the slightest sign of any luck.

"As I left a car about twelve o'clock and turned toward a coffee-shop to find a lunch, I was followed by the conductor, bent on the same errand.

"As we entered the restaurant together, he, remembering me on the car, spoke of the weather, and how bad it was for traffic.

"I replied, and we sat down at the same table.

"After some general conversation he said with a laugh:

"Did you see that fellow get a shock this morning? He got his heel against the heater, and as his other foot was on the metal mat on the floor, and wet with snow, he got quite a dose. He jumped as if he had been shot!"

"How's that?" said I. "Do I understand that it is possible to get a shock on your cars? I thought the claim was made that they are perfectly safe?"

"'Oh, they're safe enough,' he replied; 'but, you see, the heater that stands against the seats behind your legs is full of electricity. Of course, it won't hurt you simply to touch it; but if your feet are all snow and on the metal mat when you touch it, you will get a shock. I've often laughed to see women jump.'

"After I had eaten my lunch I returned to my watch, but no results followed. Then I went to my room and proceeded to think. When I retired that night I had evolved a plan that I believed would result in the capture of my quarry.

"The next morning was bright and pleasant, and soon after nine o'clock I was again on the cars, this time as a retired soldier—that is, I had an empty sleeve, my arm being hidden under my buttoned coat, and in general was military in manner and appearance. But there was one thing that did not pertain to my disguise, and it was this: in each pocket of my trousers I carried a long key-chain of steel, which, if allowed to dangle, would reach quite to the floor. How I proposed to work it will appear later.

"Before entering a car, I took pains to cover my feet with snow to such an extent that I could knock off enough on the floor to wet the shoesoles of anyone sitting next me. Then I chose a seat near the little heaters that stood against the sides, and fell into a doze.

"I would ride sometimes a mile, and sometimes further, then change cars, avoiding any appearance on the same car twice. The fine day was in my favour, for many people were without rubber-soled shoes, and therefore the more likely to feel the shock if they meddled with my pockets.

"Although seemingly half asleep, I can assure you that I watched carefully the parties who seated themselves near me, and if a suspicious-looking one appeared, I would allow the steel chain to dangle down to the floor until it touched the heater, then with the wet snow on the metal mat about the feet of my neighbour, do you not see that any hand coming in contact with the coins, which were in the same pocket as the remainder of the chain, would necessarily receive a sharp shock?

"I had passed two hours or more, riding a number of miles and watching a number of persons, but no one had yet appeared who seemed to me at all suspicious.

"At last, just as I entered a car and knocked a fresh lot of snow on to the mat at the side of the seat I desired, two men came into it, both of whom looked to me like 'crooks.'

"I was on the alert at once, and as they stepped in, I was about to move so that one of them might seat himself near me, when two ladies also entered, both well dressed, and evidently women of fashion, and the men paused and permitted them to take seats first.

"One of them placed herself close to me, and I looked as if I were going to change my position.

"The chain was hanging as I have described, for I had arranged it as the men entered, and I was mentally reviling my ill luck, paying no attention to my business at all, when a shriek rang through the car, I felt a hand struggling in my pocket, and almost mechanically I seized it.

"In an instant the car was in an uproar, for I had gripped the fair wrist of one of the fashionables who had seated herself by my side—and worse, within her closed hand she held some of my money and a bit of my key-chain. The clever pickpockets were women.

"Recovering my self-possession as soon as possible, I smilingly apologised to the lady for the condition of affairs, but retained my hold of her hand and insisted upon her accompanying me to the police-station.

"At first she objected, and her companion joined with her in refusing, but I quickly showed my authority for arresting them.

"A sudden hush fell upon those in the car, and as my prisoners began weeping, I said:

"'Ladies and gentlemen,—I am not a resident of this city, but have been called here to discover certain unknown thieves who have picked your pockets for the past few months. I am pleased to announce that I have been successful, and that the electric cars will be safe for travel after my friends here have found a new lodging.'"

MARGIE K.

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LAST WRITTEN, . . . FIRST READ.

MINER wishes to know if it is true that the Mint authorities will coin a man's own metal for him.——If you refer to gold, it is perfectly true, but they will not coin your silver for you. The Mint buys its own silver and makes a very good profit on coining it.

L. D.—Quite right. In Scotland, at one time, capital punishment was by drowning.

F. B. G.—There is no reason whatever why your wedding should not take place upon any day of the year your bride-to-be should fix upon. A couple of centuries ago it was quite a different matter, however. There were certain "close" seasons every year. From Septuagesima Sunday until Low Season, weddings were forbidden, also from Rogation Sunday to Trinity Sunday. At Advent marriages were once more discouraged, and it was not until January 13th following that weddings were again permitted.

L. P. C. wants to know why soldiers carry canes in their hands.——Probably to prevent them from slouching, as a good many civilians do; and they undoubtedly add smartness to the general appearance of Tommy Atkins.

NATURALIST.—To find the rarest bird in existence, you must go to the mountains between Annam and Laos, where there is a certain kind of pheasant. For many years its existence was known only by the fact that its longest and most splendid plume was in much request by mandarins for their headgear. A single skin is worth £80, and the bird living would be priceless, for it soon dies in captivity.

ATHLETE.—Indian wrestlers and athletes train on a diet consisting chiefly of milk, with a little goat's flesh and plenty of farinaceous food.

JACK asks: "Why do widows wear caps?"——The origin of the custom is extremely ancient. It may be traced back to the Egyptian and and Grecian practice of shaving off the hair in periods of mourning. But as without hair there was a danger of catching cold, the men wore wigs upon their bald crowns, and the women caps. The custom was continued by the Romans for some time, but after it was partially abandoned, the women still concealed their hair.

N. P.—The reason popular tales are not put into writing amongst the Mohammedans is that the reading of romances is forbidden in the Koran; they are therefore passed from one story-teller to another.

SOCIALIST.—The share of land that would fall to each inhabitant of the globe were it equally divided would be about twenty-three and a half acres.

J. C.—Yes, it was stated by an electrical expert only about twelve years ago, when giving evidence before a Parliamentary Committee, that he did believe that the telephone would come into very general use in this country. He probably admits his mistake now. The telephone would be far more extensively used than it is, were the service as efficient as it ought to be and the rates less exorbitant; but while the annual fee is so high, and the instrument retains the character it seems to have acquired as a machine for the generation of bad language, its use will be restricted.

D. G.—The costliest fur is that of the sea otter. A single skin of this animal will fetch as much as £200.

E. B.—As regards its main origin, English is certainly a Low German language, while modern German is a High German tongue. This does not, however, imply any inferiority in the origin of our speech, as you seem to imagine. Low German was spoken by the inhabitants of the low-lying coastland whence our Saxon ancestors came, and High German by the inhabitants of the higher interior country.

DUBIOUS writes: "If a man finds a letter lying in the road, stamped and addressed, what should he do with it?"——The most sensible thing would be for him to post it in the nearest pillar box. If, however, he did not care to take the responsibility of posting it, he had better hand it to the first policeman he meets.

S. C.—If kept continuously running, a watch will tick 160,144,000 times in a year.

STICKLER.—Your idea that only one who has lost both parents is, correctly speaking, an orphan, is quite wrong. The word "orphan" comes from the Greek, and merely means one bereft of either parent. The word was, therefore, used quite correctly in the phrase to which you take objection.

W. D.—There are many ways of proving that the human eye does not always see things as they are. For instance, if a column which supports an entablature is perfectly straight, it appears to lean outward, and it is therefore made to lean inward; the edges of roofs are raised slightly at the centre, as if made perfectly level they would appear to drop about the middle; corners are made to look square by being in reality a little broader-angled, and hundreds of other similar examples might be given.

WILLIAM B.—A single bee collects only about a teaspoonful of honey during a season.

ALICE G. has recently broken off her engagement, but she has not yet returned the ring. She writes to ask if this is necessary.——Of course it is. You should not have broken off the engagement in the first place without returning the ring at the same time. Under the circumstances it would be quite natural if your lover were to suppose that you were not serious, and merely regarded it as what is commonly known as a "lover's quarrel." Besides, to dismiss the man and keep his presents would be distinctly bad taste on your part.

S. W.—The first permanent military force in England was the King's Guard of Yeomen, established in 1486.

ALWAYS THE SAME writes to say that he cannot understand why people should be constantly changing the cut, shape, and general style of their clothes. To him it is nothing but a source of annoyance and inconvenience. "For instance," he writes, "twenty years ago I began to wear collars of a certain shape, but, no sooner had I got accustomed to it, than it was out of fashion. As it was extremely comfortable I have refused to wear any other style ever since, but have had to have them made specially for me."——You ought to try and accommodate yourself to the varying moods of fashion, to a reasonable extent. Under the circumstances you ought to go to China. There a man may wear the same clothes for a lifetime without being out of style, so little does the fashion change.

O. H. asks: "Has a woman ever been Pope?"——There is a tradition to that effect, but it has been refuted over and over again. "Pope Joan," as she was called, was supposed to have lived in the eleventh century, and to have worn the tiara for the space of two years under the title of John VII.

W. S.—Your morning cup of coffee will give you a good idea of what kind of weather to expect. When the bubbles that collect on the top of the coffee form a frothy mass in the centre of the cup, you may rely upon fine weather; on the other hand, if it collects in a ring round the edge of the cup, you may expect rain.

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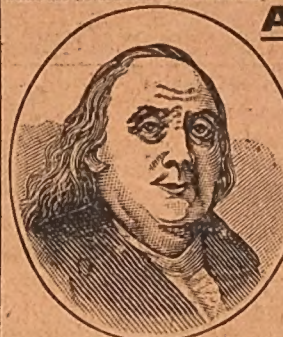
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1935/-. 12ft. by 396ft. 1940/-. 12ft. by 397ft. 1945/-. 12ft. by 398ft. 1950/-. 12ft. by 399ft. 1955/-. 12ft. by 400ft. 1960/-. 12ft. by 401ft. 1965/-. 12ft. by 402ft. 1970/-. 12ft. by 403ft. 1975/-. 12ft. by 404ft. 1980/-. 12ft. by 405ft. 1985/-. 12ft. by 406ft. 1990/-. 12ft. by 407ft. 1995/-. 12ft. by 408ft. 2000/-. 12ft. by 409ft. 2005/-. 12ft. by 410ft. 2010/-. 12ft. by 411ft. 2015/-. 12ft. by 412ft. 2020/-. 12ft. by 413ft. 2025/-. 12ft. by 414ft. 2030/-. 12ft. by 415ft. 2035/-. 12ft. by 416ft. 2040/-. 12ft. by 417ft. 2045/-. 12ft. by 418ft. 2050/-. 12ft. by 419ft. 2055/-. 12ft. by 420ft. 2060/-. 12ft. by 421ft. 2065/-. 12ft. by 422ft. 2070/-. 12ft. by 423ft. 2075/-. 12ft. by 424ft. 2080/-. 12ft. by 425ft. 2085/-. 12ft. by 426ft. 2090/-. 12ft. by 427ft. 2095/-. 12ft. by 428ft. 2100/-. 12ft. by 429ft. 2105/-. 12ft. by 430ft. 2110/-. 12ft. by 431ft. 2115/-. 12ft. by 432ft. 2120/-. 12ft. by 433ft. 2125/-. 12ft. by 434ft. 2130/-. 12ft. by 435ft. 2135/-. 12ft. by 436ft. 2140/-. 12ft. by 437ft. 2145/-. 12ft. by 438ft. 2150/-. 12ft. by 439ft. 2155/-. 12ft. by 440ft. 2160/-. 12ft. by 441ft. 2165/-. 12ft. by 442ft. 2170/-. 12ft. by 443ft. 2175/-. 12ft. by 444ft. 2180/-. 12ft. by 445ft. 2185/-. 12ft. by 446ft. 2190/-. 12ft. by 447ft. 2195/-. 12ft. by 448ft. 2200/-. 12ft. by 449ft. 2205/-. 12ft. by 450ft. 2210/-. 12ft. by 451ft. 2215/-. 12ft. by 452ft. 2220/-. 12ft. by 453ft. 2225/-. 12ft. by 454ft. 2230/-. 12ft. by 455ft. 2235/-. 12ft. by 456ft. 2240/-. 12ft. by 457ft. 2245/-. 12ft. by 458ft. 2250/-. 12ft. by 459ft. 2255/-. 12ft. by 460ft. 2260/-. 12ft. by 461ft. 2265/-. 12ft. by 462ft. 2270/-. 12ft. by 463ft. 2275/-. 12ft. by 464ft. 2280/-. 12ft. by 465ft. 2285/-. 12ft. by 466ft. 2290/-. 12ft. by 467ft. 2295/-. 12ft. by 468ft. 2300/-. 12ft. by 469ft. 2305/-. 12ft. by 470ft. 2310/-. 12ft. by 471ft. 2315/-. 12ft. by 472ft. 2320/-. 12ft. by 473ft. 2325/-. 12ft. by 474ft. 2330/-. 12ft. by 475ft. 2335/-. 12ft. by 476ft. 2340/-. 12ft. by 477ft. 2345/-. 12ft. by 478ft. 2350/-. 12ft. by 479ft. 2355/-. 12ft. by 480ft. 2360/-. 12ft. by 481ft. 2365/-. 12ft. by 482ft. 2370/-. 12ft. by 483ft. 2375/-. 12ft. by 484ft. 2380/-. 12ft. by 485ft. 2385/-. 12ft. by 486ft. 2390/-. 12ft. by 487ft. 2395/-. 12ft. by 488ft. 2400/-. 12ft. by 489ft. 2405/-. 12ft. by 490ft. 2410/-. 12ft. by 491ft. 2415/-. 12ft. by 492ft. 2420/-. 12ft. by 493ft. 2425/-. 12ft. by 494ft. 2430/-. 12ft. by 495ft. 2435/-. 12ft. by 496ft. 2440/-. 12ft. by 497ft. 2445/-. 12ft. by 498ft. 2450/-. 12ft. by 499ft. 2455/-. 12ft. by 500ft. 2460/-. 12ft. by 501ft. 2465/-. 12ft. by 502ft. 2470/-. 12ft. by 503ft. 2475/-. 12ft. by 504ft. 2480/-. 12ft. by 505ft. 2485/-. 12ft. by 506ft. 2490/-. 12ft. by 507ft. 2495/-. 12ft. by 508ft. 2500/-. 12ft. by 509ft. 2505/-. 12ft. by 510ft. 2510/-. 12ft. by 511ft. 2515/-. 12ft. by 512ft. 2520/-. 12ft. by 513ft. 2525/-. 12ft. by 514ft. 2530/-. 12ft. by 515ft. 2535/-. 12ft. by 516ft. 2540/-. 12ft. by 517ft. 2545/-. 12ft. by 518ft. 2550/-. 12ft. by 519ft. 2555/-. 12ft. by 520ft. 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562ft. 2770/-. 12ft. by 563ft. 2775/-. 12ft. by 564ft. 2780/-. 12ft. by 565ft. 2785/-. 12ft. by 566ft. 2790/-. 12ft. by 567ft. 2795/-. 12ft. by 568ft. 2800/-. 12ft. by 569ft. 2805/-. 12ft. by 570ft. 2810/-. 12ft. by 571ft. 2815/-. 12ft. by 572ft. 2820/-. 12ft. by 573ft. 2825/-. 12ft. by 574ft. 2830/-. 12ft. by 575ft. 2835/-. 12ft. by 576ft. 2840/-. 12ft. by 577ft. 2845/-. 12ft. by 578ft. 2850/-. 12ft. by 579ft. 2855/-. 12ft. by 580ft. 2860/-. 12ft. by 581ft. 2865/-. 12ft. by 582ft. 2870/-. 12ft. by 583ft. 2875/-. 12ft. by 584ft. 2880/-. 12ft. by 585ft. 2885/-. 12ft. by 586ft. 2890/-. 12ft. by 587ft. 2895/-. 12ft. by 588ft. 2900/-. 12ft. by 589ft. 2905/-. 12ft. by 590ft. 2910/-. 12ft. by 591ft. 2915/-. 12ft. by 592ft. 2920/-. 12ft. by 593ft. 2925/-. 12ft. by 594ft. 2930/-. 12ft. by 595ft. 2935/-. 12ft. by 596ft. 2940/-. 12ft. by 597ft. 2945/-. 12ft. by 598ft. 2950/-. 12ft. by 599ft. 2955/-. 12ft. by 600ft. 2960/-. 12ft. by 601ft. 2965/-. 12ft. by 602ft. 2970/-. 12ft. by 603ft. 2975/-. 12ft. by 604ft. 2980/-. 12ft. by 605ft. 2985/-. 12ft. by 606ft. 2990/-. 12ft. by 607ft. 2995/-. 12ft. by 608ft. 3000/-. 12ft. by 609ft. 3005/-. 12ft. by 610ft. 3010/-. 12ft. by 611ft. 3015/-. 12ft. by 612ft. 3020/-. 12ft. by 613ft. 3025/-. 12ft. by 614ft. 3030/-. 12ft. by 615ft. 3035/-. 12ft. by 616ft. 3040/-. 12ft. by 617ft. 3045/-. 12ft. by 618ft. 3050/-. 12ft. by 619ft. 3055/-. 12ft. by 620ft. 3060/-. 12ft. by 621ft. 3065/-. 12ft. by 622ft. 3070/-. 12ft. by 623ft. 3075/-. 12ft. by 624ft. 3080/-. 12ft. by 625ft. 3085/-. 12ft. by 626ft. 3090/-.